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MATERIALS FOR THOUGHT.

MATERIALS FOR THOUGHT.

DESIGNED FOR

YOUNG MEN.

BY THE

Rev. GRIFFITH OWEN.

PHILADELPHIA:
WILLIAM S. & ALFRED MARTIEN,
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS volume does not aim at originality; it is simply a compilation. The selections are made from choice and rare publications, not easily accessible to most readers.

Should this meet with favour, it will be succeeded by several others of similar size, on practical and improving subjects.

The object of the compiler is to aid Young Men, and others, in becoming labourers in the conversion of the world.

The present is a time for action—simple, direct, energetic, efficient action. Young Men have an important part to perform in the benign and glorious enterprise of winning souls to Christ. All have something to do for the glory of God, and the good of man. Let each one, then, be up and doing, working while the day

lasteth, seeing the night of death will soon come, when no man can work.

We offer this as a NEW-YEAR'S GIFT, with the prayerful hope that it may aid our Young Men, and others, to begin the year well.

MATERIALS FOR THOUGHT.

OBLIGATIONS OF YOUNG MEN.

I HAVE WRITTEN UNTO YOU, YOUNG MEN, BECAUSE YE ARE STRONG.—1 *John* ii. 14.

THE sainted John when he penned these words was standing upon the very verge of heaven; he had passed through the five stages of human existence—infancy, childhood, youth, manhood and old age. Time had now silvered his locks, and given its mellow tints to a character, which even in his earliest manhood had secured to him the title of the beloved disciple. There is through the whole of this epistle a vein of exquisite simplicity and tenderness. He looked back to the period of youth, and remembered how critical and important a season it had been to him. By the grace of God his seed-time had been rightly employed, and he was now reaping a golden harvest of sweet serenity of soul, and

a full assurance of eternal life. He had leaned upon the Saviour's bosom at the Last Supper, he had followed him the most closely in the hour of peril, and he was now finding in rich experience that such was the best preparation a young man could make for the sober realities of age, and for an approaching eternity. Hence his counsels were turned to young men. "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong." His reference is not to the bodily, but mental vigour of youth. Mental strength is a merciful gift of God, which may be wasted on trifles, or perverted to evil, or used for great and good purposes. It is the power which God has imparted to form our own character, and to control the character and destinies of others. While the praise and gratitude belong to God, for the bestowment of it, yet to man belongs the privilege and responsibility of its possession and right improvement.

"I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong." Try to realize, if you can, the sacredness and solemnity of your calling. Your very position in society affords you favourable and peculiar facilities for helping forward the cause of Christ. See to it then, that you distinctly and constantly propose to yourselves the glory of God, and the good of souls, as the great

achievements for which, by the energy, the freshness, and the enthusiasm of your age, you are eminently and peculiarly fitted to promote.

Your duties are two-fold. First, to yourselves, and afterwards to others. The first in order is your own salvation. For the neglect of this there can be no excuse. It will be of no avail that you have been anxious and active for the good of others, nothing can compensate you for your loss, nor expiate your guilt. "With all your gettings, therefore, get understanding, and in all your ways acknowledge God, and he shall direct your paths." First of all and above all, seek heart-religion, cultivate personal piety, grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Be not satisfied with past or present experience. Make some new attainments and discoveries in the divine life every day. "Follow on to know the Lord, till you come to the full stature of perfect men in Christ." Pray for the baptism of the Holy Ghost, seek to have your souls possessed with the grace of God, and your hearts filled with the love of Christ. All this is essential for your comfort and usefulness in promoting the cause of Christ. As the only possible way for us to operate upon other minds is by sympathy, or the communication of feeling, how important

then it is that we should have the right feelings to communicate. Religion is to be promoted by religious men. The measure in which it is possessed, is the measure in which it will be bestowed. We cannot hope to raise others to a higher level, except as we first occupy it ourselves. If religion in us is feeble and deformed, we shall fail to propagate it, or it will become that poor, spurious, sickly thing, unworthy of the care of propagation.

What we first and chiefly need then is, before we look to others to look to ourselves. The reason why so many do almost nothing, why what they do is done so ill, why the attention is so readily diverted to secondary and sectarian considerations from the great things of our peace, is, that they require to possess religion for themselves in greater vitality, purity, and vigour. They may have received the Holy Spirit to their personal salvation, but if they are to make that salvation known in power to others, they require to be more fully assured by its truths, enriched by its consolations, and elevated by its power to a higher region of Christian life. The primitive disciples, while their Lord was yet with them, had faith in his name, but they were not prepared to declare that faith with intelligence and power, for the

salvation of the world. They were about to receive a great commission, and they were to tarry at Jerusalem in penitence, prayerfulness, and expectation, till they should receive a larger dispensation of the Spirit of grace. And so it is with us now. We must seek, and wait, and pray for the pouring out of the Spirit from on high. Young men pray, pray for the baptism of the Holy Ghost; for the prayer that is concerned about the Spirit will be answered by the Spirit. You need more of the light of truth, if you are to enlighten others. You need more of the grace of life, if you are to impart life to others. You need a supplemental conversion, if you are to convert sinners to God; and you need a richer endowment of the Holy Ghost, if you are to express his unction and energy to the world. Let these be the living convictions of your mind. Nourish them in the immediate presence of God. Prostrate yourself before his Majesty in penitence, and prayer, and wait in breathing expectation, until you shall be endued with the Spirit from on high. Open your whole mind and heart to the full accession of the Spirit of grace, and you shall be filled with the might and majesty of his presence. He shall dwell in you, walk in you, reign in you. You shall be inspired with all

wisdom, strengthened with all might, fitted for all service. You need, infinitely need the Holy Spirit; you need nothing besides. Receive the Holy Spirit.

Young men, ever keep in view that the high and ruling purpose of God our Saviour is to establish his kingdom on earth, and that as his true disciples this should be also your chief purpose in life; but you cannot advance religion in the world, except as it is advanced in you. What a motive we have here for aiming at preëminent piety. Apart from the personal benefit we shall derive, it is the only effectual means of extending the Saviour's empire amongst men. All things wait for this. It is not property, or talent, or numbers, that we want; it is exactly the right mind and the devoted heart. We need a clearer perception of truth, a deeper humiliation before God, a more realizing faith in the life to come, and a more thorough and unreserved consecration of ourselves to Christ. From want of this the missionary languishes in the field, and the rich man hoards up his money; the professing Christian lives to himself; and the Church slumbers at her post, or springs into fitful action from the jealous fear of being outdone. The enemy is strong, and we are weak. And why is this? It is the part of

wisdom to inquire as to the secret of our failure and defeat. That there is somewhere a real cause for all this, is beyond a doubt. Where shall we look for it? Not in God. For he waiteth to be gracious. He cannot deny himself. His hand is not shortened that he cannot save, neither his ear heavy, that he cannot hear. Where is it then? Not even in the world; dark and wicked as it may be, yet the secret of our failure and defeat is not there. Where then shall we look for it? In the Church? Yes, in the Church of the living God, which he has purchased with his own blood. She needs a supplemental conversion before she can become the prepared instrument in God's hand of converting others. She needs a fresh baptism of the Holy Ghost before she can become the ordained minister of life and bliss to a ruined world, and assume her destined position of universal empire and imperishable glory.

It becomes, then, a question of deepening interest—What is the precise thing the Church needs? It is an increase of personal holiness, a deeper sense of dependence on God, and more fervent piety in all her members. All must be deeply taught, imbued, and penetrated with the saving influence of the Divine Spirit, and thus realize their oneness with each other, by their

living connection with their glorious Head. This would at once secure to the Church all that she needs. Prayer would take a deeper tone, contributions would be made on a larger scale, the mind would receive a just conception of the grandeur of our object, the heart would be braced by one magnanimous purpose, and the band of the redeemed would be as one man, hastening to bring back the Saviour and the King.

As all of individual life must be given, so all of the whole Church is to be presented. The act of consecration is to be as extensive as the act of redemption. None, not the least, is to be exempted from the duty, or deprived of the privilege. Youth is to come with its enthusiasm, and maturity with its experience. Babes and sucklings are to raise their hosannas to the Son of David, and the hoary head is to find its crown of glory in this service. The poor is to present his mite, and the rich to pour forth their treasures. The learned must yield their talent, and the young men their energy. On every volume, on every implement, on every ship, on every habitation, on every sanctuary, and on every heart of the redeemed, must be the one living inscription, "Holiness to the Lord;" and the whole Church, as the sacramental host of God's elect, must arise in her

might, placing her feet on the weapons of earthly warfare, and lifting her hands to heaven, send forth the triumphant shout—The world for Christ! The world for Christ!

Young men, see to it that you do your part to bring about this happy state of things. And may God give you the united soul, the mighty heart, and the perfect faith to which conflict is easy, and victory sure; and so dispose your mind that you may ascribe all the glory of your redemption to God and the Lamb for ever!

THE VISION OF YEARS.

On the verge of the late year, and the eve of its successor, I was musing on the lapse of time, and the rapidity with which years succeed each other, when I sunk into that state in which the exercise of the senses is suspended, the imagination takes possession of the mind, and leaves us no means of ascertaining whether the scenes which pass before us are those of fancy, or of vision. Leaving each reader to determine this as he may think most probable, I proceed to describe the scene which passed before me.

From the total vacuity in which I found my-

self when I became unconscious of the objects of sense, I quickly saw arise a sombre figure, very slenderly attired, but in a manner so peculiar, that I supposed she had dropped some articles of ornament or dress which she had formerly worn. She seemed eager for departure, and holding her face half averted, left me a distinct view only of a part of her form; but as her appearance excited in me an unconquerable desire to become acquainted with her, I followed with eager looks and hasty steps, when, still keeping her face toward the distant horizon, and moving off, she thus addressed me:

"Child of Adam, I perceive thy mind, and am unwilling to deny thee the instruction which my history affords. I am the daughter of a hoary sire, whose name is Time, and as my father's children are numerous, though short-lived, the sons of men distinguish us by various names, and very frequently they just designate us by certain numbers. My first appearance among mortals was in a very different form and attire. Hope dressed me in her own gay colours; and Prospect covered me with silks of various pleasing figures. I danced before the inhabitants of the earth to the cheerful sounds of music, and particularly fascinated the young, and those who, neglecting to learn by experience, always

remain children. I talked to them of pleasures to be enjoyed, and fortunes amassed; told them that each generation was wiser than its fathers, and would succeed in schemes of pleasure and profit, which with all others had failed. Thus many were induced to launch into expenses by which they are now ruined; not a few drank so deeply of the cup of sensual pleasures that their health is impaired; while the great mass have for the daughter of Time neglected the overwhelming interest of Eternity.

"But advancing in age, I grew more grave, and, as I sometimes hope, less foolish. I found that in the giddy dance of frivolity I had dropped some of the ornaments of Prospect, and in a fit of despondence I tore off, with my own hand, many of the fine colours with which I was bedecked by Hope. I now feel somewhat of the chill of age, and the seriousness of approaching death. Nothing but what is solid affords me pleasure, and by way of reparation for the delusions I created in my early days, I leave with thee this faithful admonition: *Beware of my successors!* Like me, while young they will flatter, but their hopes are fallacious—their disappointments are cruel. Listen to the voice of departing Time, for this is faithful and true. Distrust the tales of ap-

proaching years, they are but soothing lies. Above all, cease to give thyself wholly to the children of Time, for their stay is short; soon they will leave thee to dwell alone with Eternity."

I hung upon the lips of this instructress, drinking in with eagerness her lessons of wisdom, which I felt as medicine to my soul. When suddenly I perceived that she had removed from me unawares, and taking a last step, she seemed to descend below the horizon, and disappear. But on turning round with mingled rapture and regret, I saw approaching from the opposite quarter of the heavens another personage, whom I conjectured to be a relation, so great was their resemblance. Her attire, however, chiefly attracted my notice, for it was exactly what the former had described her's to have been in the early part of her life. Taught by the voice which first vibrated in my ears, I inspected this new appearance with the keen eye of suspicion, and saw beneath the gay silks that streamed in the wind, the sombre scanty attire of the former. She accosted me with many smiles, wished me joy of a visit from the new year; congratulated me on the happiness it promised, and seemed disposed to become my confidant as well as my counsellor. But I inter-

rupted her abruptly; told her that I had heard the departing voice of her predecessor, and begged her to lay aside her false colours, for they could no longer deceive. Apparently surprised, but not altogether displeased, she replied—"Son of Experience, thou art wise, and since thou art no longer to be deceived with the illusions of Hope, I will lend thee the hand of Opportunity. The child of Time, who now greets thee, shall aid thee to meet the Father of Eternity, to serve thy generation according to the will of God, and by years of religion to secure ages of bliss."

The surprise and pleasure of this address roused me from my entranced condition. I felt better and wiser from its contemplation. I started up, and with my pencil noted down all I could recollect of it, with the prayerful hope that each reader, instructed by the vision of Time, may, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, find it a reality, and so live and labour here on earth, that when they descend below the horizon of time and disappear, they may pass into the home of the redeemed, and there to dwell for ever with the Lord.

THOUGHTS ON WINTER.

And it was winter.—*John* x. 22.

In the Holy Land winter extends from the beginning of December to the end of January, and is often remarkable, especially in the more mountainous districts, for the variableness of its temperature and the intensity of its cold. Hence those realizing descriptions of winter which abound in Scripture, "He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?" As in all the other seasons, so in winter also, we see the wisdom and beneficence of the great Creator.

> "These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
> Are but the varied God. The rolling year
> Is full of Thee."

The life of spring, the glory of summer, the bounty of autumn, and the mellowing frosts of winter, all proclaim the infinite goodness of that gracious Parent, who has said, "while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." Gen. viii. 22. We may

regard winter as a *season*, as an *emblem*, and as an *incentive to benevolent actions*.

I. Contemplate winter as a *season*. As such it presents many themes of profitable meditations. And,

1. Winter displays the power, wisdom, truth, and goodness of God. He has so constructed our planet, as, by its spherical form and inclined position to the great central luminary, to occasion all the varieties of heat and cold, from the fervid glow of the tropics to the perpetual ice and snow of the polar regions. Winter displays God's power; its stormy winds, its raging tempests, its darkened skies, its gloomy and cheerless nights, its rattling hail, its drifting snows, its ice-bound waters, its pinching colds, are but so many demonstrations of that Omnipotence,

"Which reigns tremendous o'er the conquered year."

Nor does winter less display God's wisdom by the succession of seasons; each one brings along with it its own peculiar provisions and gratifications. Inferior creatures by instinct, and man by reason, are taught equally by the great Creator and Benefactor to provide against the rigours and hardships of the wintry months, and the beauty and loveliness of the other seasons are enhanced by the gloom and cold which precede

them. Winter too is the standing memorial of God's faithfulness; it is no less his appointment than the green verdure of spring, the sweet flowers of summer, and the rich fruitfulness of autumn. It is his snow that covers like a fleece of wool; it is his ice that is cast forth like morsels; it is his cold, before which neither man nor beast can stand. It is he that saith to the snow, "Be thou on the earth;" and by the breath of God frost is given. While the earth standeth winter shall be one of the memorials of God's unbroken covenant.

Nor is winter less the monument of God's goodness—it is the night of the year, in which the weary soil takes rest, and thereby prepares itself for the vegetative toils of the spring and summer. By the snow the earth is covered from the rigours of the wintry blast, and by the frost those innumerable insects are destroyed, which would eat up its varied productions. By the action of winter, both animal and vegetable life are invigorated and improved; while for all his creatures God provides, some by reason, some by instinct, comforts and accommodations calculated to meet the exigencies which press upon them. Truly we may say, "Thou crowneth the year with thy goodness." But,

2. Winter is a season of trial and privation

to many. In polar regions it puts forth a rigour which often threatens their scanty and sluggish population with an extinction of existence, and renders it next to impossible to search for their wonted provisions amidst mountains of snow and oceans of ice. If we would enhance our own comforts, and adore the goodness of God to those who dwell in these temperate climes, let us often think of the poor, skin-clad savage, in his snow-built hut, amidst continents of ice, shivering on the very confines of existence.

The aged, too, with whom the current of life runs slow, whose limbs are tottering and feeble, and who are but little able to exert themselves to keep up their animal warmth, often feel most keenly the rigours of winter. If they are Christians, and know the blessings of communion with God, they will know how to bear the tedious languor of this season; and if nothing but nature comes in to their aid, they will feel that it is gloomy and cheerless. To many such it is the harbinger of the stillness and coldness of that dreary mansion in which they must lie till they hear the sound of the last trumpet. How many, especially of the aged, have been called into eternity since the commencement of the present cold season! Happy, thrice happy,

they who have entered into the joy of their Lord; but, O how sad the death of the aged sinner!

The poor in particular feel the pressures of winter. Many of them are shut out from their ordinary labours, and are thereby deprived of their usual means of support. Surrounded by numerous families, and destitute of proper food, clothing, and fuel, they are ready to exclaim, "Who can stand before His cold?" In many parts of our country, and more especially in our crowded cities, there are tens of thousands who rise up in the morning without knowing where they are to find their next meal. The poor, indeed, are always with us; but the severity of winter augments their number, and aggravates their privations. We could take you at this moment to the habitations of many of God's children, pleading his promise, and living on his faithfulness, who are straitened beyond expression in their circumstances, and who are doomed to feel the pinchings of a scanty diet, a scantier wardrobe, and a cheerless dwelling.

Winter is the season of social intercourse. This is one of its comforts as well as one of its temptations. Social intercourse, when properly regulated—that is, when put under the control of religious principle—is a great solace of exist-

ence. The fellowship of kindred minds, more especially where true godliness is the bond of union, is an emblem of heaven itself. It is our duty to use hospitality without grudging, and always to endeavour to turn it to the best account. It is the height of selfishness, and argues but little for the social temperament of the gospel, where Christians are content to live in solitude, and are never drawn towards each other by the force of principle and the attraction of holy love.

I am not pleading for worldly parties among Christians—we have too many of them already; but for those intercourses around the social board, which, when conducted in the spirit of piety, and terminated by acts of devotion, cannot fail to promote a spirit of love. The children of this world are, in their generation, in this respect, wiser than the children of light. They know how to call in the aid of the social principle to promote vanity and folly; and surely Christians should not lose that advantage to their profession, which arises from the sanctified intercourse of social life. A dozen respectable individuals in a Christian congregation might, at a comparatively small expenditure, organize a system of religious conference and social devotion through the whole community.

As winter is the season most commonly devoted to social and friendly intercourse in general, let Christians take advantage of this prevailing habit, and turn it to some happy account for eternity; but let it never degenerate into a school for scandal, or into a source of increased worldly conformity. Let the social meetings of our winter evenings have a sweet savour of godliness spread over them, and yet let them be so cheerful and happy, that the younger branches of our several circles may feel that there is nothing gloomy or repulsive in the spirit and fellowship of Christians.

It is earnestly recommended that these meetings should commence at an early hour, and that the members of each family should be in their own habitation by ten o'clock, that no infringement of the domestic order or domestic devotion may be the result of the intercourse proposed. If a minister of the gospel, or some gifted private Christian, can be associated with these meetings, to give a tone to the conversation, to expound in an engaging manner some portion of Scripture, and to lead the devotions of the friendly circle, it will greatly enhance their interest and their usefulness; but where this cannot be attained, let the head of each family be the priest in his own house. It is very

desirable that this thought may not be lost sight of by any who have it in their power to exercise the rights of Christian hospitality. It will enlarge the sphere of their own benevolence, by ministering to the instruction and happiness of others. It is not a series of expensive entertainments that is recommended, but rather a succession of love-feasts, such as obtained among the early Christians, and which drew their hearts one towards another, and aided their triumph over the selfishness and carnality of the world.

II. Contemplate winter as an *emblem*. All nature is full of beautiful and instructive analogies. Winter presents many such analogies. We may view it as an emblem of old age and death. The spring of promise has fled, the summer of bright suns has passed away, the autumn of withered hopes has arrived, and winter, dreary and cold, has followed in its turn, to complete the round of man's earthly career.

"'Tis done! dread winter spreads his latest gloom,
And reigns tremendous o'er the conquered year.
How dead the vegetable kingdom lies,
How dumb the tuneful! Horror wide extends
His desolate domain. Behold, fond man,
See here thy pictured life, pass some few years,
Thy flowering spring, thy summer's ardent strength,
Thy sober autumn fading into age;
And pale concluding winter comes at last,
And shuts the scene."

With some who may read this article, the spring of youth has passed, the summer of manhood has ended, and yellow autumn is fast whitening into the snows of winter. As they look around them on that death which now pervades all nature, and feel its chilling and paralyzing touch, let them not forget that the signs of their approaching winter are fast pressing onward. Those gray hairs, that decay of animal strength, that dimness which creeps over their vision, that sluggish pulse, that tottering step, that fading memory, all portend that their autumn is soon to close, and that the winter of death is about to fix them in all the icy coldness and insensibility of the grave.

How then, fellow-pilgrim, have your seasons of life been spent? Did the spring time of your being send forth the sweet blossoms of early piety? Did your summer of life see them advancing into maturity? Is your autumn of life laden with fruits of righteousness? or are you compelled by a faithful retrospect of life to come to a far different conclusion? O forget not that your autumn hours are fast fading, and what is done for eternity must be done quickly. If the winter of life seals up your faculties ere yet you begin to live to God, to you there will be

no returning spring. Yours, alas! will be a resurrection not to life, but to shame and everlasting contempt.

Christian, your winter is coming, but a bright spring shall follow. That which is sown in dishonour shall be raised in glory, and that which is sown a natural body shall be raised a spiritual body. You have nothing to apprehend from age or mortality. The graves of the saints are all perfumed by their dying Lord; and he who said to Lazarus "Come forth," will speak to the earth, and to the seas, and cause them to deliver up as faithful stewards all who sleep in him.

We must not omit here to observe, that as in the natural world the rigours of winter may obtrude themselves at times upon the loveliest seasons, and nip the fairest blossoms, or kill the sweetest flower, so in the life of man, his winter may come upon him at any season, from the opening bud of existence to the ripened maturity of old age. The smiling infant, the playful child, the ruddy boy, the vigorous youth, the full-grown man, no less than the tottering pilgrim of fourscore years, may be called to wither beneath the chilling blast of mortality. Watch, O watch, then, for you know not when your Lord cometh!

Winter may be also viewed as an emblem of

spiritual death or languor. O what an appalling spectacle, if we had eyes to see it, is the winter of the soul! No spiritual verdure, not a bud, not a leaf, not a blossom to be seen—all cold, and motionless, and dead, and ghastly, and forbidding. The death of nature is involuntary, but spiritual death is the wilful suspension of all holy functions, and a depraved insensibility to every exercise and engagement suited to our immortal and accountable nature. O what a winter spiritually pervades our once happy world! Behold the trees of the forest stript of their leaves; see all nature prostrate in death, and in this cheerless spectacle contemplate the true image of a soul stript of resemblance to God, without holy principles and affections, a stranger to the meltings of penitence, the sighs of contrition, the fervours of devotion, the promptings of new obedience. O that we could lead these victims of this sad death to sigh for the approach of moral spring! O that it were with them the time of the singing of birds! O that we could see the ice-bound spirit yielding to the softening breezes of heaven! O that we could discern the first tender buddings of spiritual life springing up in their wintry atmosphere! Let them but reflect on the nature of that death which pervades

their souls! They are dead to spiritual light and vision. There is a fair and beauteous prospect before them, but they have no eye to discern its forms of grace and excellence. They are dead to all spiritual affections of love, joy, peace, and holy desire. They are dead to all spiritual exercise of prayer, praise, and devout meditation. They are dead to God himself, the chief good, and have said within themselves, "We desire not the knowledge of his ways." They are dead to all well-grounded hope; the world is their portion, and they are hastening to the judgment-seat of Christ with the lie of a self-righteous and deceived spirit. O that over millions of such ice-bound spirits the God of grace would breathe the balmy and refreshing air of a moral spring! And are there not some who, after having passed the winter of an unregenerate state and entered on the spring and summer of the new and heavenly life, have suffered a temporary decay of their spiritual graces? It is surely not with them now as it was in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about them, and when the life of prayer and communion with God was their chief delight. They have lost their first love. The enemy of souls has been sifting them as wheat. They have fallen from their steadfastness.

Their faith is weak, and is ready to die. There are the signs of approaching winter in their souls. "O backsliding Israel, return unto him from whom thou hast departed." Cry for the quickening energies of the Holy Spirit. Shake off that spiritual lethargy which has crept over your faculties. Breathe after the return of a moral spring. Look out for the early and latter rain. Repent, and do your first works. Fall down upon your knees and entreat God to restore unto you the joys of his salvation, and to uphold you with his free Spirit. Then may you hope to be richly laden with those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, which are to the praise and glory of God.

III. Contemplate winter as an *incentive to benevolent actions*. There is something in every season to teach us to imitate the never-failing bounty and goodness of our Father in heaven. Winter has its peculiar lessons, especially to those on whom God has bestowed more of this world's goods than is necessary for the supply of their own wants. By partially withholding from many of his creatures the supplies of other seasons, he teaches those in affluence to sympathize with the poor and necessitous; thus constituting them ministers of mercy to certain portions of their fellow-creatures. While our cup runneth over

with the rich abundance of God's mercies, surely we cannot but think with tender pity of multitudes for whom nothing has been provided. Why is it so, that we have plenty and they are destitute of all things, but that the bounty of Heaven, which has flown so liberally into one channel, may find its way, by our own voluntary agency, into another. The whole amount of supply is God's, but he has seen fit to limit it to certain channels, that one class of his creatures may exercise sympathy and generosity, and another gratitude and becoming respect. Now if this supply, which is all from God, is consumed luxuriously, or hoarded selfishly, instead of being given forth like the bounty of the seasons, then will the gracious Parent of all call us to a dreadful reckoning for our unfaithful stewardship.

This work of charity to the poor must not be left to ocasional impulse, or mere animal sympathy; it must take the place of a Christian grace, and be provided for with a strict fidelity, according to the means of doing good which God has conferred on us. As the Lord hath prospered every man, it becomes him to lay by in store for the necessitous poor, that he may do good to all, but more especially the household of faith.

It is earnestly hoped that in this age of active benevolence it will not be forgotten by wealthy Christians, that "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Let them seriously and prayerfully reflect, what pensioners we all are upon the Divine bounty, and let it be seen by the sympathy and kindness of their deportment, that they claim relation to Him, whose blessed distinction it was, that he went about doing good.

In conclusion, let all, whether rich or poor, so spend their days on earth, that when the night of death shall come, they may pass into that land of pure delight, where their summers will last all the year, where winters and storms shall be no more, but December as pleasant as May.

MONITORY VOICE OF THE SEASON.

It is time to seek the Lord.—*Hosea* x. 12.
For ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh.—*Matt.* xxv. 13.

In the good providence of God we have again been permitted to witness the revolving seasons. Their gradual and solemn succession was beautiful and instructive. They silently pushed each other along, till at length they were merged

and entombed in that common rendezvous and resting place, the grave of the year. And now, at this moment, we find ourselves placed on the boundaries of two important periods of time. The year just closed, like its predecessors, has passed into eternity, bearing with it a faithful report of our sins, and mercies, and duties to the great Author of our being and Father of our spirits, before whose tribunal we must one day stand, not as idle spectators, as we have stood in earthly courts of judicatory, where man judges his offending fellow-man, but we ourselves must be judged, and that by the Judge of quick and dead, according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad; for He hath appointed a day when he will judge the world in righteousness. He hath said, and he will bring it to pass, that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. And were we to look at things around us in a true light, we should regard closing Sabbaths, and departing years, and dying mortals, as all harmonizing with the sterner voice of Scripture, and that solemn and seasonable, and merciful admontion, "Prepare to meet thy God."

With the departing year this admonition comes to us afresh. To some it comes, who through the grace of God are prepared, and to many

who are not, and, moreover, to not a few it comes for the last time. O solemn thought! Many in hailing the new-born year, whether in the giddy dance, or sacred song, whether in the house of mirth, or house of prayer, are hailing, though unconsciously, the harbinger of their dissolution, and shall never, never hail again a new-born year. And my dear reader, very possibly you and I may be of the devoted number of those who shall die this year, for,

> "Like crowded forest trees we stand,
> And some are marked to fall."

Then let it be our fervent prayer, blessed Lord, "so teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

The warning voice of the season comes to those who are ready. Such may be said to be in waiting for the coming of their Lord, whose welcome voice shall ere long salute their willing ears saying, "Come up hither." Then, having obeyed the glad summons, and having done with earth, and time, and death, and sin, they shall enter into rest, and be for ever with the Lord. Let then the only rightful expectants of such bliss, true Christians, regard the present season as a fresh memento of their fast concluding probation, and their approaching departure to their

heavenly home. Let it induce deep and serious thought, close examination, and fervent prayer. Let it lead to a fuller surrender of the heart to God, than which nothing is more wanting. Let it, we say, lead to a fuller surrender of the heart to God, to more entire devotedness, to weanedness from the world, to greater spirituality of mind, to livelier and stronger faith, to holiness; in a word, to a nearer approximation of character to the blessed Saviour's, and to renewed zeal and effort and enterprise in advancing his cause and kingdom. Thus, O Christian, may the dawn of a new year arouse thee to press onward in thy heavenly course, doing the work and will of God, till in his righteous providence that will be accomplished, thy work done, and thy soul at rest.

The warning voice of the season comes to those who are not ready. Not ready! How discordant and infelicitous the expression, but how doubly so the idea or import! Not ready! What unhappiness does such a position involve in worldly things. Apply it to a voyage, a journey, or even some pecuniary engagement. Suppose the passage taken, the vessel under weigh—and the passenger ashore. But we need not follow out the comparison in all its bearings to see the folly and unhappiness of being not

ready. And if it be thus in things temporal, what in things spiritual?—if so in time, what in eternity? Say what must it be to die, and not be ready—to be summoned to the tribunal of God unprepared. Why, it is to be lost—to perish—and that eternally! for then grace and mercy will be clean gone for ever; and a great ransom cannot deliver us. How good then, and gracious of Almighty God to admonish us by his word, and encourage us by his gospel, as well as call to us by another departed and unimproved year, to be also ready, seeing that we know not how soon death may come! Then, my dear reader, lay this matter to heart, I beseech you. O that you were wise to know this, and consider your latter end! Be thankful that you are still in time, that you are favoured with the means of grace, that all things are now ready, and that the blessed Saviour invites you to approach him, assuring you that whosoever cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out. Then this year be persuaded to hearken to his gospel; follow the instructions of his word; bow at his footstool; cast your helpless, guilty soul upon Christ; and cherish in your mind the fact that he will receive and save you. Thus have we set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Choose ye then, this year—yea,

this day, whom ye will serve; as for me, I will serve the Lord.

The warning voice of the season comes to some for the last time. Such it addresses as did the midnight cry the virgins—Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him! O might we all hear and regard it in this sense, seeing that many of us shall hear it no more! Then, Christian, seek to have thy lamp trimmed and burning. Mount the watch-tower of faith, and prayer, and holy expectation, for soon—this very year it may be—the Master will come, and call for thee, and thou shalt enter into the joy of thy Lord. And O, nominal Christian, unrenewed person, though thou mayest have the form of godliness, and bear the lamp of profession—whose heart is yet unchanged, whose sins are unpardoned, and who of necessity must be pronounced a foolish virgin, take heed, lest in the end—thy fast approaching end—O take heed lest, dying in thy present state, thou be classed, and doomed, and condemned with such. O wilt thou not hearken to this final midnight cry? Delay not, lest when thou criest for mercy in a dying hour, the door be shut, and the Lord answer, "Depart from me, I know you not." Finally, O sinner, hear the voice of the Saviour; repent, and be converted; watch and pray;

watch and hearken while the cry is yet in thine ears, for thou knowest neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh. The present is God's time, and may it be yours, to seek and secure the salvation of your soul. It is time to seek the Lord.

DEPARTURE OF THE OLD YEAR.

Last night, at twelve o'clock, expired a friend, of whom, take him all in all, perhaps I shall never see his like again. As I stood by and saw his last moments, I exclaimed, "How our blessings brighten as they take their flight!" For now came rushing upon my memory all the good qualities of the deceased, and all the advantages I derived from his company. Ah! he was indeed a fast and steady friend to his latest breath; he stood by me, and never ceased to do me good. I have seen many changes in the affections of men; they have been mere swallows, the birds of summer; but summer and winter, by night and by day, he was a true and faithful friend. Every time I retired to rest at night he gave me a parting word of advice in case I should never see him again; and each

morning, as I opened my eyes, I saw him by my bedside, inviting me to accept his renewed aid to live for God. How many pleasures I have enjoyed in his company!—to count them would be to number the grains of sand which bound the ocean; to compass the detail into this article would be to take up the waters of the sea in the hollow of my hands. Two things, however, I must notice—the first is, that for three hundred and sixty-five days he introduced me more than once a day to a closet-audience with the King of kings; and although I must own to you, that in His Majesty's presence I was so delighted that I forgot the departure of my friend, he never upbraided me with it, but seemed better pleased with me for it all the day. The other tribute of gratitude which I must pay to the memory of my friend, is to acknowledge that two-and-fifty times in his life he proposed to me to spend the day in pleasure; to imitate the life of angels, and begin heaven without waiting for dismission from earth. And O,

> "How pleased and blest was I,
> To hear the joyful cry,
> Come, let us seek our God to-day."

To how many profitable discourses have I listened on these days, and almost reproached my

friend for bringing them to a close. Shall I ever see the friend with whom I shall enjoy again such happy days? But, as I have a Friend dearer to me even than the late deceased, whose elegy I now write with tears, this renders him doubly precious to my plaintive memory, that he was ever forward to give me opportunities to serve the Lord who bought me with his blood. He would often tell me this was all he came for, and was never better pleased than when I treated him as if he were good for nothing but to help me to work for God. Ah, how often has he roused me when drowsy, and jogged my elbows when lazy in this cause! Now his lips are sealed up in silence, and I hang over his cold corpse. I seem to hear his voice, louder than before, when he used to cry, "Awake, sluggard! was I only sent to see thee sleep?" Thus roused by his repeated faithful warnings, I have enjoyed the felicity of at least attempting to do something for Him who has done and suffered all for me. And this, to tell the truth, (without fearing a frown from the angry shade of my departed friend,) is the most pleasant reflection on the review of our past friendship.

"Millions of ages hence," the dear deceased used to say, "you may be the better for my

company, and according as you treat me well or ill, your very heaven may taste of it."

Who, then, of all those who shall read this obituary, will not sympathize with me in the loss of such a friend, or refuse to indulge me in the eulogium which we love to pass on those whom death has torn from our fond embrace—especially as I could hint that he was no very distant friend of theirs neither. O, join with me in blessing Him whose years know no end! for the Lord gave, if the Lord hath taken away. Yes, I gratefully adore Him that said, "Spare him yet another year!" But I am afraid those who have hitherto sympathized with me in my irreparable loss will now startle with horror, when I disburden my oppressed conscience, and confess to you that I have been, in a great degree, the murderer of the deceased. What! murder such a friend as you have described? What a wretch! I confess it all, and admit the blackness of my guilt; for I am too much my own accuser to palliate my crime; though, if I were disposed, I could silence the loudest voice by saying, He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone. But such recrimination ill suits the feelings of my heart. 'Tis true, I never, with malice prepense, as the lawyers speak, openly said, like some, Let us play to kill

Time; for he must be a murderer in grain who would, in cold blood, kill so good a friend as Time. But then, by repeated slights and injuries, we may murder a man by inches, so that he may at last die of a broken heart. I fear I am verily guilty of the blood of the deceased. Ah, how often he reproached me for my treatment of him, and told me I should repent of it when it was too late, and he was gone for ever! Surely he possessed a prophetic spirit, for I feel the truth of his words thrill through my afflicted soul. And of how much murdered time and abused talent may one year accuse us before the bar of God? O Thou whose blood cleanseth from all sin, blot out this my guilt, and let this solemn returning period of time be at least improved to renew my application to that atonement which

> "In the gospel now appears,
> Pardoning the guilt of numerous years."

And since I may never have another, for this year I may die, so teach me to number my days as to apply my heart unto wisdom.

MEDITATION OF AN INTERESTING MOMENT.

THE moment of transition from the old to the new year is intensely solemn and full of interest. What shall I call it—December 31st? or shall I call it January 1st? The clock strikes twelve; the bells with sudden peal ring out the old year, and usher in the new. While reviewing the different periods of my life, as they turn upon their own hinges, I involuntarily exclaim, "Thus passes Time!—thus Eternity advances!" I feel myself at this moment as on the isthmus, where, standing between both, I contrast eternity, on which I am entering, with time, when it is decreed to last no longer. Time then appears as a glass, which has poured forth its rapid stream, and now stops exhausted. Eternity presents an ocean of infinite expanse which knows no shore nor ebb.

In time, I see the abode of vanity and of change, the passing creatures of a moment. There all things are born but to die; appear, only to vanish. Brass corrodes, marble crumbles, and the whole scene passes as the panoramic figures on the canvass; but eternity I

confess the residence of durability, the dwelling-place of Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, the great I AM. Around his throne, or crushed beneath his feet, are myriads of beings who know no change, but feel their doom for ever sealed. Through all the shifting scenes of time I contemplate crowds of probationers—some wishing, others dreading, and all expecting to change their fortunes. I see the stamp and colour of unknown ages depending on the moment which is now upon the wing. In one spot I observe a few who feel the awful ground on which they stand, and, anticipating the infinite consequences of this truth, bear on their countenances a serious impression; but on every other side nothing is seen but a drunken oblivion, which swallows in the immediate draught all thoughts of the impending future.

How different eternity! There nothing hangs in doubtful suspense—each knows his doom. Religion no longer trembles with anxious fears, nor guilt tastes any more delusive hopes. All are occupied in gathering what they have sowed. In heaven they recall their former faith and hope, joys and sorrows, prayers and hymns, and now taste the sweet fruits of grace exercised in long past ages. In hell they feel again stings which they thought blunted, and are haunted

with recollections for which they hoped to have found Lethean draughts. Time, though such an evanescent drop, has dashed with gall of bitterness the cup which eternity shall not exhaust.

Time, as it flies, seems to recall the pleasure it brings, and says to the righteous, Ye must only taste of the brook by the way—I am bearing you on my wings to that fountain whence you may drink immortal draughts of never-failing bliss. With equal force it says to the holy sufferer, Each pang diminishes the tale; and every throb becomes more tolerable, as it announces the approach of exemption and ease. It is eternity which makes pleasure pleasure indeed, for no bitter expectation of reverse harasses the mind; but the thought that an unalterable futurity of bliss is all my own, gives the exquisite taste of eternity to every sensation of delight. But in the stagnant lake of endless wo, an unknown aggravation is thrown into each pang, from the consideration—This must last for ever—an eternal toothache only would be a hell.

Will time thus deeply affect eternity, and should not eternity influence time? It is this which gives importance to my character, and imparts intensity to all my actions. I must live

for ever in heaven or in hell; and as I live, so I must die; and as I die, so I must appear in judgment; and as I appear there, so I must continue throughout all eternity. Let me now, in the accepted time, believe in Him who will freely bestow on me eternal life. Let me begin this year with the resolution of President Edwards, so worthy of his exalted and pious mind: "Resolved, that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God's glory and my own good profit and pleasure, without any consideration of the time—whether now, or ever so many millions of ages to come."

THE OLD AND THE NEW YEAR.

ANOTHER year is gone! another year is come! It is nearly impossible to utter these exclamations with indifference. The divisions of our time are meant to have a moral as well as a secular use. While they regulate our worldly occupations, they are designed to convey us a still richer benefit by fostering reflections and inducing us to anticipate futurity. Standing on the boundaries of two great periods of time, man seems placed in circumstances only less affect-

ing than that of the angel in the Apocalypse, who, with either foot on the divided elements of land and water, lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever that time should be no longer.

Another year is gone! How swift, how imperceptible is the flight of time? Moralists have compared its course to that of a stream, a shuttle, or an arrow; but they are not an adequate illustration. I can sit down by the gliding waters and mark their passage to the ocean. I can detect the movement of the shuttle as it flies from hand to hand in the loom; and I can track the fleetest arrow as it cleaves its way through the pathless heaven. Time in its flight I cannot see, I cannot detect. I watch for its coming, I would mark its departure, but it is too noiseless and subtile in its course for me to realize the one or the other. I can neither say it is here, nor it is gone; for time moves so much quicker than my words, as to falsify my declarations: and the traveller on his way, with the sun over his head and its shadows at his feet, if he would verify the lapse of time, must still ask of his companion the hour of the day. It is this that spreads around us so much illusion. Time is always forsaking us, yet seems always the same; to-morrow is so like to-day,

that we are willingly beguiled into a belief of its identity. Hence are we perpetually running into erroneous calculations. We have grey hairs on our forehead, and we know it not. Our hopes are green and florid when our root is withered and corrupting. We cannot believe that we have numbered so many years as have gone over us, and are repeatedly inquiring, Can they be so many? Can we be so old? Childhood is surprised into youth; youth is surprised into manhood; manhood is surprised into age; and age, full of the dreams of life, is surprised into the grave. So it was with our fathers—so it is with us: and those who have died early have been so few as only to form an exception to the rule, and they have been made an exception only by the wisdom which cometh down from above.

Another year is gone! Titus once exclaimed, "I have lost a day!" How many listening to the monitions of conscience have reason to say, I have lost a year! To what purpose have they lived? Whom have they blessed by their existence? What good have they done? What evil have they shunned? What homage have they paid to the great Creator? What trust have they reposed in the only Redeemer? What regard have they shown to that celestial voice

which is calling them away from sense, and vanity, and sin, to glory, honour, and immortality? What unhappiness and guilt must be mingled with their reflections! They have lost a year! What pleasures they must have missed, what privileges they have neglected, what mercies they have abused, what sin they have accumulated! Many during that period have lost their health, their property, and dearest and nearest friends, but they are not so wretched as the man who feels that he has lost the year. Other losses may be retrieved—this cannot. In it there is henceforth no place left for repentance, no space to act again what has been performed so much amiss. What has been done is done; what has been omitted is omitted. Its report is complete, its record is sealed. It is gone, and as it left us, how it frowned like a spectre on the guilty, and said, "I meet you again in judgment."

There are some as guilty of this abuse of past time who are not yet so uneasy. They have determined to banish reflection and not to distress themselves by inquiry. They refuse to muse on the past, or to forebode the future. The present time is their eternity. Jest dwells on their tongue, levity flutters in their eye, and laughter plays on their cheek. They are awake only to

animal indulgences, and they are resolved on their fullest gratification. To what shall they be likened?

I read of a youthful party, not long since, who went on an excursion upon the beautiful and romantic river C——. The heavens were fair and bright above them, and the waters shone like a brilliant and expanded mirror around them. Merriment, frolic, and song were theirs; the eye, the ear, the heart were intoxicated with worldly joy. In the fulness of their pleasure they had forgotten to guide their vessel into a course of safety, and in an instant they found themselves borne away by an irresistible current towards a tremendous fall. They saw their danger, felt it inevitable. Now they shrieked in agony. Now they pressed their hands on their eyes, and sightless and speechless awaited the event. They fell, they rose no more! Such is the state of those who, borne down the stream of time towards an awful eternity, amuse themselves with present pleasure, and refuse to inquire about their destiny and the means of their salvation till salvation is impossible; only they are carried away by a more impetuous torrent, shoot into a deeper gulf, and are precipitated to a death more lasting, more awful, and more profound.

Another year is come! Shall we trifle any longer? Shall this year, invaluable as it is, be in our hands as a price in the hands of a fool? Shall it be consumed by *ennui*, squandered on selfish indulgences, or exchanged for lying vanities? We seek to be happy, but we are often decoyed from the path to happiness by the blandishments of pleasure. To be happy we must be serious. To be happy we must respect our whole existence; we must regard to-morrow as well as to-day, eternity as well as time. We must live not to ourselves, but to others; nor merely to others, but to God. The mind must have great and appropriate objects before it, and the heart must be enlarged by great and benevolent sentiments. The passing year, evanescent as it seems, would then be linked to eternity, and would live for ever. Life would lose the tedium which arises from its being directed to no object, or the disgust which springs from embracing only those objects which are frivolous. The soul would be elevated to a conscious alliance with heavenly things; the occupations of earth would derive interest and importance from their connection with the will of God and an advancing immortality; and all the ardour and the energy of which we find ourselves the subjects, would find an ample field for their

ceaseless exercise in the pursuit and possession of an inheritance whose boundaries we may ever explore, but can never define, whose treasures we may ever enjoy, but can never exhaust.

Another year is come! O! is not this a time to turn to the Lord? Spared when we deserved it not—entrusted with another portion of time, though we have so little understood its value—shall we not esteem it at once a treasure and a trust? And shall we not expend it to the honour of Him who rather lends it to us than gives it? Shall we not consider our ways and acknowledge our trespasses, with penitence towards God and faith in the Redeemer? Shall we not inquire what, in ourselves, in our connections, in the Church, and in the world, we can do to mitigate the wrongs we have done, and to express our gratitude for the mercy we have received? Shall we not at length be taught to seek our happiness in the joy of others, our honour in the service of the Saviour, and our life in the world to come? Is it too soon to be wise, too soon to be happy, too soon to awake from a base and dormant existence into the life of angels and of God? One year has left us and recorded its testimony in the skies. Another year is given to us, in pity to our follies

and our crimes. O! is not this a time for humble prayer, holy resolutions, and heavenly aspirations? Can any period be so suitably the birthday of the soul—our spiritual jubilee—the year of a blessed and everlasting redemption?

Another year is come! and this may be our last! This is probable to us, and it is certain to many—to an almost incredible number. It is no exaggeration to say that twenty millions of mankind will die before the expiration of this year. And if so vast a number will certainly be removed into eternity, what presumption, what madness would it be, to determine that it does not include us? Yes, this year we may die! What do we say? Man is but the creature of a day, and shall he presume even on a year? Many, many shall die while the year is yet young, and few of its days are numbered. Now, while you are reading, thinking, perhaps hesitating, your fellow-beings are groaning, expiring, and passing to an awful and final judgment. O, how we stand on the very confines of eternity! How thin the veil which separates our vision from the glories above us—the horrors beneath us! A moment, and we may ascend to heaven, or sink to hell!

Another year is come! Let the Christian meet it with hope. Hope will foster prayer,

stimulate to activity, and exalt the mind from the seen to the unseen—carry it out from the present to the future, and to the Christian all things are full of hope. The opening year may bring affliction, but it will also bring support; it may bring wants, but it shall bring supplies; it may bring duties, but it will bring strength and grace to perform them. He may be cast down—he cannot be destroyed; he may be persecuted—he cannot be forsaken; he may be sorrowful—he shall rejoice for evermore. Nothing can alarm him, nothing disappoint him, nothing impoverish him. Consume the earth by unquenchable fire, he loses nothing, suffers nothing. If he live, he lives to the Lord, and that is the height of happiness on earth; if he die, he is present with the Lord, and that is the consummation of bliss in heaven. Happy Christian! to remain here is hope; to depart for ever is more abundant hope. The years of thy life are all blessed; the year of thy death supremely blessed. When thou shalt cease to exist thou shalt begin to live, and live for ever. The period of thy dissolution is the date of thy immortality—the day of thy emancipation, thy nuptials, thy coronation. It shall soon come, and till it come, thou art in a gracious state of preparation for its arrival. Already the lights

of heaven and eternity are irradiating thy path. A little while, and care, crime, death, all that is earthly and perishable, shall be to you as though they had never been. A little while, and thou shalt awake to glory such as no eye hath seen; to converse such as ear hath not heard; to joys such as no heart hath conceived; to a blessing as lasting as it is full, and as fresh as it is abiding.

"Yes, the bright day shall soon arise,
That bids us welcome to the skies.
No more by earthly ties confined,
Hope her sought liberty shall find;
Spread her glad wings and take her flight
To worlds of everlasting light."

THE NEW YEAR.

WHAT is a year?—a portion of time. And what is time? It is not a mere abstraction, but is marked by striking and visible characteristics. It had its beginning, and will have its termination; and in its progress it has its minutes and more extensive revolutions—its hours, its days, its months, its years, its epochs, its eras, its centuries. It has also its histories written in the annals of heaven and in the records of earth.

It is known fully and completely to God alone; partially and obscurely to man. It has been called a parenthesis in eternity—

"A moment fixed for ever there."

It is a continued and unbroken series of causes and effects from a commencement onward to a close. Time was appointed by the eternal Creator and Governor of the universe to be subservient to the development and manifestation of a stupendous and glorious plan of moral government. Time was to include the periods, and earth was selected to be the scene of the successive exhibitions of the parts of this great drama, which was to begin and is to close with the collective history of time and all terrestrial things. In this great development man was chosen as the moral and accountable agent, the instrument of the divine Creator's will. The earth was prepared as the theatre of moral action, and the sphere of providential operation, for the purpose of drawing from the fall the guilt, the misery of man—a mystery of wisdom, of grace, and of glory, the unfolding of which should excite admiration, and form matter of praise among superior intelligences, and the redeemed and immortal sons and daughters of Adam through a coming eternity. Subordinate to this, and in perfect harmony with it, God has ordained a certain economy of life, which be-

longs exclusively to earth and time, so that while the heir of eternity is working out his individual destination, he is likewise working out the good of society and the well-being of the species, as the creatures of earth and time.

Man is brought under the empire of time to be prepared for eternity, and therefore through the medium of the Holy Scriptures, the evangelical ministry, and the appliances of the sanctuary and the Sabbath, he is to pursue this as the first and the last end of his existence in time. Here he is to learn to know, love, and obey God as his Father, his Redeemer, and his Sanctifier; and therefore he must read, he must study, he must prayerfully study the sacred oracles, and attend to the solemn observance of every institution that is designed to explain and enforce them. He must learn now in time that he is fallen, that he is restored; and his mental and moral faculties must be raised to God by all the instrumentalities which time can supply. He is placed in the most favourable position, in which he may contemplate the most glorious scenes, and attain the most glorious objects. Here breaks upon him the idea of God, which transforms into its own likeness the mind that receives it, which grows in effulgence by having transferred upon it new perceptions of beauty

and holiness, attracting to itself as a centre whatever bears the impress of dignity or of goodness; which borrows splendour from all that is fair, subordinates to itself all that is great, and sits enthroned on the riches of the universe. Here the sinner and the rebel is reminded how an adequate foundation has been laid for the supernatural duties of faith and repentance. The objects of the one are exhibited, motives to the other are supplied; while repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ are set forth also as the bestowments of infinite grace. Here he is brought in contact with a system which inculcates universal holiness, and which, cordially embraced, inspires the love of that eternal rectitude which will survive all sublunary changes, emerge from the dissolution of all things, and be impressed in effulgent characters on the new heaven and the new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness.

Whatever intellectual acquirements, and whatever principles form the human character, time developes them in the various relations of life, and in the voluntary and actual operations of the moral and accountable being. Whether we are impressed with the awful importance of our condition as the sojourners upon earth for a season, and apply our hearts unto wisdom, to

those duties which arise out of our relation to God and to each other—or whether we suffer our intellect to be debased by ignorance, and our hearts to put forth their depravity in actions which shall go before to accuse and condemn us on the day of judgment, time is opening before us those various developments. Here we are transient subjects of its empire; but that flood is silently bearing us away, and we shall soon find ourselves in other regions, where time cannot follow us, where the character formed in time is indelible, and its consequences certain and eternal. There is something exceedingly impressive in this thought, that embraces at once immutability and eternity. Apply to man, to his weal or woe, to his happiness or misery, and what an intense interest does it create in our hearts. It will soon be realized by us; we shall know, ere long, far more vividly than any imagination can conceive, the human interests involved in the economy of time. How indispensable then does it become, that we should obtain some just notions of the relations of human life to time, and to those human interests which it involves; and especially is it incumbent upon us to realize these notions at the commence of a new year.

The first idea which strikes us as we approach

these relations, is that of brevity. What is its extreme limit?—three-score years and ten—years that are moments. How many of these years do men really live as rational, reflecting, and acting moral agents? But what is the average amount of human life? The average amount of human life has been, with a good degree of accuracy, supposed to be thirty-three years. One generation of the human race, therefore, or about nine hundred millions, leave this world and enter eternity within this period. Thirty millions, of course, die in a single year—are summoned to the judgment, and enter upon the recompense of reward. Few, perhaps, under the age of thirty, will allow themselves for a moment to think that that will be the limit of their earthly existence; and all who have passed that period will be presuming upon their four-score years. Yet even should their presumption be realized, the question again recurs, What is your life? There is the blank of infancy—deduct that from the sum. There is the death of sleep (and this is hardly a figure); and there is the sleep of indolence, that frequently steals over us; there are the menial services of the body, and a variety of indispensable employments that seem to be a suspension of the intellectual and moral life. Deduct all these, and

reduce life to the period of its real vitality; when it is able to put forth, with vigour, the power of thought and action—and what have you left? A hand's-breadth. And deduct from it then the days of darkness, of decrepitude—the living death of extreme old age—how long, then, is the longest life? Nay, in this view, how brief the period that intervenes between the cradle and the grave? And were all these years unimpaired and perfect, in which thought and action were vigorous to the last—compare these with the knowledge which man has to acquire, the duties he has to discharge, and the glorious destiny he has to win, what would be the full measure of his life if stretched out to its remotest period, when weighed in the balance of eternity, and compared with these mighty interests of his soul's well-being, which can be secured only in time?

But there is another view of the relations of human life to the economy of time, and that is the rapidity of its progress. Time travels on with an uninterrupted, inexorable step. However long our movements may stop, however still our work may stand, our restless hours pursue their course; moment presses upon moment, day treads upon day; not a particle of our sand makes the smallest pause. The awful *now*

asks us but once to embrace it; then turns its back on us, and our hands are stretched out after it in vain. Time flies; aye, who can describe the astonishing rapidity of its movements. We may, however, place it in a mathematical light. The sun is stationary in the heavens; the earth moves around it at the amazing rate of about fifty thousand miles an hour. Now this is literally the flight of time, the speed of human life!

Suppose you were to be placed in a vehicle, and told that you should live only till it had moved round a certain space so many times—you would at once feel that in this condition the length of your life depended not so much on the space the vehicle had to go over, as on the rapidity with which it moved. The faster it went over the allotted space, the sooner your life would end. And, O, if you loved life, if you dreaded death, how much would you grudge every inch of ground you passed over? You would deem the slowest pace of the vehicle too fast. Or if, during your progress, you were aroused to a sense of having lived, so far as concerned those interests for which life was given, totally in vain, how would your alarm and terror keep pace with the rapid movement that was bearing you away!

Now this is substantially true. The earth on which you live is the vehicle; and you are assured, that when it has carried you around the sun a certain number times, your life shall end. Do you not then feel anxious to know the rate at which you are running in this journey of life? And when you are told that you are accomplishing it at the rate of so many miles an hour, may you not exclaim, with the prophet, "My days are swifter than a courier; they flee away"? You can actually calculate the ground you have gone over. Multiply the rate at which the earth travels annually by the number of years you have lived, and you will see how far you have already travelled, and find that, whether you have been sleeping or waking, thoughtful or inconsiderate, you have been always rushing towards the goal of life, drawing nearer to it by thousands of miles every hour; so that however vast the space you had to travel over at first, it is daily, hourly diminishing, at a rate which will soon bring you to your journey's end.

Uncertainty is another characteristic of the relation of human life to time, and the human interests which it involves. See how suddenly death may arrest you, and drag you from your vehicle at the moment when perhaps you were dreaming of happy years, and accumulating a

fortune, with troops of friends, and distinctions of honour. The fact is, whatever human interests are comprehended in the empire of time, and which human life is to secure, there is but one clear, certain moment in which they can be pursued; and that is the *present* moment. There is indeed certainty in the past; but that is gone—it will never be recalled. Already it has sent up its account to be registered, in order to be produced at the day of final judgment.

This should remind us of another characteristic of the relation of human life to time; and that is, *probation*. When we contrast the faculties of man, his high capacity of reason, and his religious instincts; when we contrast all this with the debasing influence of the world, and the vanity and brevity of life, we are assured that the present is not a final state. When we consider, too, the struggles piety has to maintain against the antagonism of unbelief and sin; when we perceive the latter often triumph; when vice prospers before our eyes, and virtue is driven in poverty to weep in secret; when all moral elements are confounded, and we behold disorder all around, which no providence interferes to rectify, and no retribution visits with well-deserved punishment; and the passive virtues and active energies of the good are severely

tried and perpetually counteracted, and evil is stirred up from the very depth of depravity, and pours forth its acrimonious and polluting streams over the face of society; when, in one word, moral good and evil are seen to be just placed in circumstances to draw forth the strongest manifestations of their opposing characters, but are not followed by their due rewards and punishments—the conclusion is inevitable, that the present state is not final; it is probationary; it is the seed-time, of which immortality will reap the harvest; it is a soil bearing evil and good, and both may be sown; and whatever is sown shall yield its proper fruit, but not while winter lasts. The probation continues only while the soil is cultivating, and the seed is growing, until it is proved of what sort it is. Here he that sows to the flesh in another state, shall reap corruption in the same manner; he that soweth to the Spirit, shall reap life everlasting. Just as the individual regards the human interests which the economy of time involves, will be his happiness or misery in eternity.

Here we have another reflection to suggest, namely, that this relation of human life to time is one of tremendous responsibility. Every step of the probation, opportunities neglected, princi-

ples sacrificed, obligations renounced, guilty passions indulged, temptations thrown in the way of others; all the evil done, all the good prevented; the pollutions of the heart, the offences of the life, corrupt motives, sinful desires, the neglect or the abandonment of the great purpose for the accomplishment of which the economy of time and probation were brought into existence—each and all will be the subject of investigation in the day of judgment, and its decision will be in strict accordance with the evidence in every case. We are not merely passing through time into eternity; one is not the mere consequence of the other, but our eternity will be happy or miserable as we have answered or defeated the great end of our terrestrial probation. Every child of Adam that dies, and has lived long enough to stand upon his probation—that is, who has passed the years of infancy—has to account for all before the bar of the Eternal. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." The moral consciousness of this world will prove either the heaven or the hell of the next. We are at this moment standing in the path and taking a direction either to the one or the other. And what do these fearful considerations imply? If from this single point of

time the destinies of eternity take their character, and if in the choice, the decision, the improvement of a moment, immortal and everlasting interests are suspended, it behoves us to consider the special duties which spring out of these various relations, which assume peculiar weight at the present season. The voice of the opening year to every reader is, "Redeem the time—the days are evil." And every devout heart which is impressed with the solemn convictions we have endeavoured to awaken, is breathing the supplication of the Psalmist, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

The first hours of a year ought to be spent in serious, faithful retrospection. A year is gone, but its responsibilities remain; and who can estimate the alarming amount! He that is so infatuated as to deem a single year an insignificant part of the life of man, betrays the sad secret of his degeneracy, and forces upon us the appalling reflection, that his whole earthly career has been a blank, and responsibility and guilt have kept an equal pace with his flying hours; and that if arraigned at the bar of God, who requireth that which is past, he would sink reproved and condemned into everlasting ruin. Time, even its minutest parti-

cles, is infinitely precious; gold and rubies, compared with it, are less than nothing. "I have lost a day!" was once uttered with a sigh; with what a groan should it be said, "I have lost a year!"

Introspection is never more seasonable than at the point which divides one period of our earthly existence from another. When Time calls upon us to record his progress, and to pause between the past and the future, the receding and the advancing year have both a voice, which may be heard in the sanctuary of conscience; but then every other sound must be hushed, and the soul must commune with itself alone.

There is one class of our readers who may derive eminent advantage by commencing the year with a sacred regard to its improvement. We refer to the rising generation, who, in the nature of things, have before them the greater portion of that life which is the allotment of humanity; who have not squandered or wasted it away, or who are not so far launched on the ocean of dissipation and folly, that they may be brought back to the shore, to prepare for another voyage, on another ocean, and with the port of immortal happiness in view. These, therefore, we would earnestly and affectionately counsel.

There are three grand divisions of your time which, if rightly improved, will embrace the whole round of human obligation as regards the progress of the present life to its final destination. There is first, your secular time, which belongs to society; there is secondly, your own time, the hours when you may retire to study, or to the bosom of your family, to the lecture-room, to the sanctuary of religion, or to betake yourself to the walks of usefulness; these seasons are portions of the common days of the week; then there is your sacred time, which belongs to God, and to the concerns of eternity. As the last is the most important, we shall begin with it.

The Sabbath is the palladium of your heart amidst the temptations and fascinations of the world; it is the sanctuary of whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report. Reverence the Sabbath and keep it; count it honourable, and make it your delight. Meet with your brethren in the faith, where prayer is wont to be made. Mingle your devotions with the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. Give the truths of salvation a welcome to your hearts. Let the retired hours of this

blessed day find you employed in holding communion with God, and in visits of mercy to the ignorant and the wretched that are perishing around you. You will then be guarded against every evil. You will enter fully into the merciful design of Heaven, in connection with time and the human interests that it involves. A Sabbath well spent, its hours rightly improved and devoted, not to objects of secular importance, nor to the cultivation of the intellect and of the taste, but to the increase of spiritual knowledge, and preparation for eternity; this will keep alive in your bosoms a conscientious solicitude to please in all things and at all times.

Thus your secular time, though employed in the business of the world, will be regarded by you as valuable, not only for its secular use, but as affording you the opportunity of acquiring much useful knowledge by observation and intercourse with your fellow-men, as well as of impressing them with the force and purity of your principles, the consistency of your character, and the superiority which true religion confers upon her true disciples.

If the business or occupation which we follow as our proper calling be pursued with a spirit of industry, with a love of justice, and with a mind free to converse with God in the

intervals of worldly engagements, this will sanctify all that is secular, and the common affairs of life will thus be turned to a religious account. It is possible so to work in our calling as not to neglect to work in our high calling, to unite the Church and the commonwealth, the interests of the body and the interests of the soul—the time which is more properly your own, which you can dispose of as you please without interference or control. It is on the right improvement of these portions of life that your intellectual, moral, and spiritual excellence greatly depends. If in these seasons you keep your heart with all diligence, if your recreation be but an exchange of one employment for another, if the pursuits of science or the acquisition of accomplishments supply you with materials for reflection and become a zest to devotion rather than a drawback; and above all, if among the various objects which employ the energies of the Church, you select one on which to expend your thoughts and your best and persevering efforts, then will you indeed rightly improve your time; your leisure moments will be golden mercies, you will enjoy life, and it will be a blessing. Nor is this all. What we sow in a few minutes and spare portions of time, grows up to crowns and sceptres in a glorious eternity.

THE VOICE OF THE NEW YEAR.

"TIME WASTED IS EXISTENCE; USED, IS LIFE."

ANOTHER of our years has passed away. Its varied aggregate of events is completed. They cannot be cancelled or recalled. Their effects will never cease to be felt for good or for evil. On communities they will extend throughout their entire history, and on individuals throughout eternity. In ages yet to come, men will appeal to them as the source of changes still telling on the destiny of empires, and modifying the aspect of the world; and amid the rewards and retributions of another life, multitudes of spirits will turn to them as having fixed upon them the indelible stamp of happiness or misery —as deciding them for heaven or hell. In great and solemn events which constitute eras in history, and speak in monitory tones to the nations of the earth, the year which has just closed is invested with a prominence that will render it memorable throughout all ages.

And turning to the religious aspect of the past year, what pentecostal tokens of the nearness of millennial times have been granted to the Church of God in this land—what living and

immortal testimonies have been given to the power of the gospel. How many myriads have been constrained to listen to the voice of wisdom, and have followed in her shining footsteps; forsaking the slippery and ruinous ways of sin, and climbing the ascending and ever-brightening path of the just; and yet, alas, multitudes have stopped their ears against the voice of the charmer, have stifled convictions, have quenched the Spirit, and have plunged with greater and more fatal avidity into worldly pursuits, amusements, folly, and sin. Happy the churches that can look back with mingled feelings of gratitude and humble triumph on efforts put forth and sacrifices made for the glory of God and the salvation of men; and happy those among the young or those of riper years who can reflect on the year that has gone as the turning point in their moral history, as the commencement of a life that shall never end! But how sad, how portentous the review, in the case of those to whom the past presents no memorials of repentance, no evidence of faith, no hallowed seasons of prayer, no bright spot illumined and immortalized by victory over sin and communion with God.

But as the year which has just closed was fraught with events important to the world, to

churches, to families and individuals, so is that which has commenced. It will be ever memorable to thousands. As it rolls on, week after week and month after month will unfold events whose influence will spread over every future year, and accompany us into the world beyond. What, every thoughtful reader will ask, will be the position of our country at its close; what the aspect of the churches of this land; what the condition of the family or circle of friends to which he belongs; and what his own destiny, as an intelligent, immortal being? The man who does not awake to solemn musings on the future, when the new year, trumpet-tongued, summons all to thoughtfulness, self-examination, and prayer, must be the victim of an insensibility that implies long familiarity with sin, and, it may be, indicates judicial abandonment by the Spirit of God. The new year calls us to commit our ways to God in deep thoughtfulness and prayer, as he alone knows what it will bring forth.

The year that has commenced is veiled to every mortal eye. No human sagacity can tell what may take place before its close. No created wisdom can penetrate the mystery that shrouds it, or make adequate preparation for its contingencies and possibilities. Imagination,

drawing its materials from the past, may gladden or terrify by the pictures it presents;—anxiety may tremblingly anticipate scenes of perplexity, sorrow, or disappointment, and may cease to draw comfort from the promises and providence of God;—hope may spread its glittering wing, and speed on throughout the entire course of the year, lighting up stars of promise along its way, and enriching every day with fresh and joyous tokens of happiness and success;—keen-eyed speculation may attempt to pry into the future, and pretend to foresee and classify the fluctuations of trade, and commerce, and politics;—presumptuous self-confidence may assume the mantle of the prophet, and tell of vials to be poured out, and new phases of history to be evolved; but all will prove nothing better than the vague surmises of men who attempt to give shape and substance to the impalpable shadows of a dream. The eye of Omniscience alone beholds, and the hand of Omnipotence alone can marshal and control the events with which the future teems. The fears of anxiety and the visions of hope will alike, in a thousand instances, fail of realization; the predictions of matured wisdom, as well as the arrogant assumptions of reckless speculation, may be rebuked; the sky that is now brightest may be overcast;

whilst that which is cloudy, and charged with the elements of tempest, may become serene and sun-lighted. The times and the seasons are in the keeping of God, nor can man or angel be permitted to invade that sacred province. The future is a sealed book, and can be opened and read by finite beings only when it becomes the present.

At the commencement of a new year, then, as far as mere human sagacity and foresight are concerned, we resemble voyagers launching on a sea, overhung with impenetrable mists; or soldiers listening to the first trumpet-note that calls them to a conflict which may issue in victory or defeat. We must advance; an irreversible law sweeps us on; but it is a veiled and untrodden future that lies before us, whose darkness enwraps all that we hope or fear, and seems to gather around us in thicker gloom in proportion to our anxiety to read its secrets. Our refuge then is God, and not man; our guide, faith, and not experience, or the forecastings of human sagacity; and the appeal addressed to us by the new year is, "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the

Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Again, the new year summons us to confidence in God, because it is charged with events of the highest importance to multitudes, and it may be to us.

Whilst the year which has just commenced is wrapped in shadows, which neither the conjectures of prying curiosity nor the forecastings of anxious care can penetrate, and whilst no voice falls on the ear, to tell what may transpire during its flight, it is fraught with events important to the world, to churches, to families and to individuals; and may it not be to the reader whose eyes rests on these pages. By nature's laws what may be, may be now. There is no prerogative in human hours. Already the seeds of events, which shall be decisive of our earthly fortunes, have perhaps been sown, and it may be only the flight of a few short months is needed to bring them to maturity. A tempest may be impending, whose nearness a vivid flash or a few falling drops have already proclaimed, and before many days have passed, it may sweep in desolation over us. The scene that now looks fair and serene, all bathed in sunshine, may be stripped of everything that kindles admiration

or envy, and left like one of the islands of the Pacific, over which the hurricane has passed. Each day, as it appears, will bear on its wings events, or the tidings of events, that will mock the visions of hope, and dim the gorgeous tapestries of pictured joys.

Now, the position which we occupy may appear fortified against the hazards that throng around; but a tide may be rising that may undermine the foundation on which we rest;—secret fires may be struggling beneath our feet, speedily to break forth like the slumbering volcano in wasting and ruin. Now, business may realize our best expectation; fortune may smile upon us, and multitudes may gather around to present flatteries or heartfelt congratulations; but before the close of the year, shadows may have gathered, plans may have been frustrated, and flatterers may have fallen off, like autumnal leaves when touched by chilling winds, whilst friends may be called to substitute condolence for congratulation. Now, our name may be honoured wherever it is pronounced—in the work-shop or the market-place, in the private circle or the public assembly; but calumnious tongues may assail us; falsehood may impair our reputation, and without the means of defence or vindication, we may have the bitterness to know that our

principles are questioned, and our integrity impeached, where once we were esteemed and honoured. Now, an unclouded light may rest on our dwellings, and glad faces may meet us, reflecting and augmenting our happiness; but this year a change may come—sickness and death may enter. Hearts that ever throbbed responsive to ours, may cease to beat; eyes that uniformly shone upon us with the beamings of tenderest love, may become dim; faces that looked up to us, flashing with intelligence and affection, may sink into the grave; the pall of sorrow may have taken the place of the festal garments of happiness. Multitudes who are now in the enjoyment of health, who mingle with eagerness in the festivities of the season, and are looking forward to the realization of cherished hopes, will this year be numbered with the dead; instead of the journey of pleasure, there will be departure to the regions of the dead; instead of the bridal robe, there will be the shroud; instead of gains and pleasures, there will be the cold obstructions of the tomb. And may it not be that you who read these sentences shall this year be smitten by the hand of death? Long before its close the grass may cover your last resting-place, your ear may be shut to the sounds of the world, and your destiny in eternity may be fixed,

never, never to change. How solemn then are the thoughts with which the commencement of the year should inspire us, and how monitory and urgent the appeal it addresses to us! Its appeal is, "Prepare to meet thy God;" "Watch and pray;" "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the the grave, whither thou goest."

Further: As this year may be our last, its commencement calls the Christian to increased devotedness, and the undecided to immediate decision for God.

The solemn possibility that the year on which we have entered may terminate the period of our active service for God on earth, urges upon Christians, in loud and monitory tones, the duty of augmented zeal and devotedness. Every Christian, we should ever remember, is sent on a mission intimately connected with the honour of Christ and the salvation of the world. To his care and stewardship talents have been committed, on the right employment of which his final acceptance and the brightness of his crown are dependent. The impressive thought, then, that before this year has reached its close, we may have passed away from the post of usefulness we now occupy, and the opportunities of self-

improvement we now enjoy; that the talents committed to our hands may have been recalled, and our place assigned us among the mighty company of the dead, ought surely to quicken us as if an angel spoke. If we can humbly trust that the Master, as he looks down benignantly upon us, says, "You have done what you could," the consciousness of this, combined with the thought that our efforts for his glory may speedily come to an end, should stimulate to higher and more self-denying acts of consecration to his service. It should quicken us to augmented efforts for the prosperity of the Church with which we stand connected; for the salvation of the families to which we belong; for the enlightenment of the neighbourhood where we dwell, and for the evangelization of the world at large.

If, on the other hand, we are smitten with the conviction that we have been unprofitable servants; if we feel that the Master looks down upon us saying, "Behold, I come, seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none!" the thought that the day is far spent, and the night at hand, calls us to deal faithfully with ourselves; to test our principles; to weigh and analyze our motives; to cast loathingly from us all forms and shams; to see that our efforts for the cause of God are

not marred and rendered offensive, like the gift of Ananias and Sapphira, by the part which is kept back in the spirit of dishonest and selfish concealment; and to cultivate the spirit of vigilance and prayer, that when the coming of the Bridegroom is announced, we may be ready with our lamps burning, and our loins girt about with truth.

If indecision still cleaves to us; if, amid the loud calls of Providence, the pleadings of conscience, the entreaties of friends, and the arguments and persuasions of an enlightened and faithful ministry, we have hitherto remained among the undecided, oscillating between convictions of sin and the allurements of the world—between the claims of Christ and the fascinations of amusement or business—the solemn thought that this year we may be numbered with the dead, calls us with the emphasis of a voice from heaven to decide for God. Indecision is a state of painful disturbance and peril, rapidly tending to the hardened insensibility of utter and irremediable impenitence. The vessel that is tossed from billow to billow, without rudder or compass, gains no haven of safety, but inevitably sinks amid the waves, or strews the beach with her fragments. In like manner, the man who suffers himself to become the victim

of the perilous alternations of indecision, seldom or never reaches the security, or tastes the happiness of heartfelt, undivided devotedness to the service of God. Reader, if you are still halting between two opinions, the dread possibility which hangs over you calls you to immediate decision. If you will not decide, the flight of a few months may. The hour is on the wing—it may be close at hand—that will put decision for ever beyond your reach. Before this year has closed, your opportunities of deciding for God may have ceased, and the sentence may have gone forth against you, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" Continued indecision is inevitable ruin.

Some who may read this article are perhaps altogether unmoved by the flight of time, or the possibility of a sudden call to stand in the presence of God. Many years have swept over them, and yet they have thought no more of eternity, to which they are hastening, than if they were exempted from its dread decisions and allotments. The year that has just passed has only added to the amount of their misspent time, and deepened their insensibility. Their thoughts have been occupied exclusively with the present;—business, pleasure, and, it may be, guilty indulgence, have left no room for the

solemnities of death, judgment, and eternity. Occasionally, perhaps, thoughts of God and responsibility, of heaven and hell, may have flashed across their mind, but they have speedily passed away. Like midnight lightning, they have vanished in darkness, and, by contrast, have only served to reveal the fearful and portentious intensity. Reader, do you belong to this class? This year may be your last. Beware lest you be numbered with those who, throughout eternity, shall be stung and overwhelmed with the bitter consciousness that they misspent their days, and have forfeited for ever the great end of life.

"I asked a dying sinner, ere the stroke
Of ruthless Death life's golden bowl had broke:
I asked him—'What is time?' 'Time!' he replied,
'I've lost it! Ah! the treasure!'—and he died.

"I asked a spirit lost; but O the shriek
That pierced my soul! I shudder while I speak!
It cried—'A particle, a speck, a mite,
Of endless years' duration infinite!'

"I asked my Bible, and methinks it said,
'Thine is the present hour; the past is fled.
Live! live to-day! *to-morrow* never yet
On human being rose or set.' "

THE NEW YEAR; OR, RETROSPECTS AND PROSPECTS.

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CHRISTIAN reader, let the opening year be regarded by you as a call to serious thought. Pause in your course, that both the past and the future may be contemplated in their proper lights. You have just closed one period of time, and entered on another. See to it that your mental attitude is such as to correspond with your condition and prospects. In turning your eye on the year that has closed, you will doubtless perceive much to remind you of imperfection, of negligence, and even of positive failure.

How has it been with you in the closet? Has it been a year of intimate fellowship with Heaven? or has it been one of dulness and languor in the divine life? Do not hide from your view, beloved reader, the real state of the case. O think not that you are "rich, and increased with goods, and standing in need of nothing, while you are poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked." All declensions in religion, remember, begin in the closet. Have you had a good year, then, in the closet? What progress have you made in combatting and over-

coming secret sins? What victory have you obtained over the sin that doth most easily beset you? What delight have you found in meditating upon the word, in reviewing the solemn lessons of the Christian pulpit, in striving to reach a more undisputed spirituality of mind, in struggling to possess a greater superiority to the world? In such inquiries as these, do not, I beseech you, deceive yourself. Let not the recollection of a few fitful seasons of devotion lead you to conclude that it has been a good year to your soul. Be humble before the Lord, if the verdict of conscience is unsatisfactory. But be sure not to stop here. Both the *facts* and the *causes* of your failure must be detected. New plans of devotion must be formed; old errors must be relinquished; the opening year must witness not only your godly sorrow for the past, but such fruits as are meet for repentance. Specific defects and failures must be detected and abandoned, and such new methods of prosecuting the religion of the heart must be resorted to as conscience and the word of God may dictate.

How has it been with you in the sanctuary? That is a good year to the Christian, in which the public ordinances of God have proved a decided blessing to his soul. How has it been

with you, then, Christian reader? Has the day of sacred rest been hailed by you with joy, and have its hours been devoted with zeal and diligence to the great business of eternity? Have you habitually repaired with gratitude to the house of God, and sought to mix faith with the word preached? Or has the day in which Christ rose from the dead been a weariness unto you? Have its exercises been attended in the spirit of formality, and has but little profit been reaped from its holy fellowships? O, look narrowly into these questions; and if you are constrained to say that it has been an unprofitable year with you, as it respects the sanctuary, look with scrutinizing eye into the cause, be humbled in the discovery, and seek for grace to enter with more zeal, and devotion, and profit upon the social religion of the coming year.

How has it been with you in the management of your worldly affairs, and in your intercourse with mankind? Have you been keeping your garments unspotted? Is it easy to determine whose servant you are? Or have you been exposing the Christian profession to the scorn of enemies? Have you been undecided, irresolute, timid, compromising, and wanting in holy consistency of character? If so, make a stand for God now. Time is short; awake out of

sleep. The Judge may be even at the door. This year thou mayest die; this night thy soul may be required of thee.

Are any who read these lines halting between two opinions, neglecting to confess Christ before men, stifling the voice of conscience, and proceeding from stage to stage of life without giving themselves up to the service of God? Let this year be hailed by them as a time accepted and a day of salvation. While God says to them, "Seek ye my face," let the reply of their hearts be, "Thy face, Lord, will we seek." While the Redeemer addresses them, as he did Peter, "Lovest thou me more than these?" let the response of each heart be, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

REFLECTIONS ON THE NEW YEAR.

Can it be that another year has fled! With all its joys and trials, all its sins and duties, all its instructions and privileges—is it fled?

Yes, it is gone! It has terminated the lives of millions; and like an irresistible current, has borne them on to the grave and the judgment.

It has gone—like a dream of the night, it has gone!

Amid the rapids of time, there are few objects a man observes with less care and distinctness. To one standing on the shore, the current appears to pass by with inconceivable swiftness; but to one who is himself gliding down the stream, the face of this vast extent of waters is unruffled, and all around him is a dead calm. It is only by looking toward the shore, by discerning here and there a distant landmark, by casting his eye back upon the scenery which is retiring from his view, that he sees he is going forward. And how fast! The tall pine that stands alone on the mountain's brow, casts its shade far down the valley, while the huge promontory throws its shadow almost immeasurably on the plain below. It is but a few years and I was greeting life's opening day. But yesterday I thought myself approaching its meridian; to-day I look for those meridian splendours, and they are either wholly vanished, or just descending behind the evening cloud. I cannot expect to weather out the storms of this tempestuous clime much longer. A few more billows on these dangerous seas—perhaps a few days of fair weather, is the most I can look for, before I am either shipwrecked or reach my desired haven.

Why fly these years so rapidly? It is in anticipation rather than retrospect, that men put too high an estimate upon earthly things. I have been wandering to-day in the graveyard; I have trodden softly on the place of my fathers' sepulchres. I have been playing with the willow and the cypress that weep over their dust. The generations of men dwell here. Yes, here they are; those whom I have loved, and still love, and hope to love, are here. The fashion of this world passeth away. The fair fabric of earthly good is built upon the sand; it rocks and falls under the first stroke of the tempest. Man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity. It is well that it is so. Were it otherwise, we should put far off the evil day, and live as if we flattered with immortality on the earth. When the Doge of Venice showed Charles the Fifth the treasury of St. Mark, and the glory of his princely palace, instead of admiring them, he remarked, "These are the things that make men loath to die."

On what rapid wings has this last year sped its course! How sure and certain an approximation to the close of this earthly existence! Every year adds to what is past, and leaves less to come. What is your life? It is even as a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then

vanisheth away. What is it when compared with the amount of labour to be accomplished, and the magnitude of the interest at stake? What is it compared with the facility with which it may be interrupted, and the ten thousand causes of decay and dissolution it is destined to encounter? What is it compared with the ever-enduring existence to which it is an introduction? How fugitive—how frail! Hardly has the weary traveller laid himself down to rest, when he is summoned away to pursue his journey, or called to his everlasting home. We spend our years as a tale that is told. The flying cloud, the evanescent vapour, the arrow just propelled from the string, the withering grass, the flower whose beauty scarcely blooms ere it is faded, and whose fragrance is scarcely perceptible ere it is gone, are apt similitudes of the life of man.

I am but a wanderer, a pilgrim, a sojourner on the earth. Though everything is cheerful about me, I feel to-day exiled and alone. A thousand recollections crowd upon my mind to remind me of the past, to premonish me of the future, and to lead me to some just conceptions of the present. This world is not my home. I have made it my resting-place too long. I hear a voice to-day, in accent sweet as angels use, whispering to my lonely heart, "Arise and de-

part hence, for this is not your rest." I am away from my Father's house; I have felt vexations and trials; I have experienced disappointments and losses; I have known the alienation of earthly friends; I am not a stranger to dejected hopes; I know something of conflicts within. But, now and then I have a glimpse of the distant and promised inheritance, which more than compensates me for all. It is no grief of heart to me that I have no enduring portion beneath the sun. I am but a passing traveller here; I would fain feel like one who is passing from place to place, and going from object to object, with his eye fixed on some long-wished-for abode beyond, while every successive scene brings me nearer to the end of my course, and all these earthly vicissitudes endear to me the hopes of that final rest. To live here, however happily, however usefully, however well, must not be my ultimate object. I was born for eternity—nay, I am the tenant of eternity even now. Time belongs to eternity; it is a sort of isthmus—or rather a little gulf, with given demarcations, set off and bounded by lines of ignorance; but it mingles with the boundless flood; it belongs to eternity still. A great change indeed awaits us. We must drop this tabernacle, and go into a world of spirits; but we shall

be in the same duration. I must live for eternity.

In entering on another year, I know not from what unexpected quarter, or at what an unguarded moment, difficulties and dangers may come. O that I could enjoy more of the favour of God, more of the presence of the Saviour, more of the sealing of the ever-blessed Spirit! O for more of a calm approving conscience, and more of the delightful influence of the peace-speaking blood of Jesus Christ. From some cause or other I begin this year with a trembling heart. I fear I may lose my way. I am afraid lest I should turn aside from the straight path; lest I may repose in the bower of indolence and ease; lest I may sleep on enchanted ground; lest I should be ensnared if not destroyed by an unhallowed curiosity; lest I should be betrayed by my own presumption and self-confidence. I can remember some, who have forsaken the way and fallen into snares, and the sad memorials of their folly are strewed along my path. Why should I hope to pass unwatched or unmolested? The enemy is not asleep. Many a time have I been baffled by his artifices. Rest where I will, and rise when I may, he is always at my side. And shall I dream of peace? Shall I not watch and pray?

Will not presumption and sloth cost me dear? Blessed God, hold thou me up and I shall be safe. Pity thy erring creature; forgive thy wandering child. Keep, and with the bounties of thy grace bless thy poor suppliant. Preserve him another year. Let him not be conformed to this world. Give him a warm and humble heart. Let nothing interrupt or retard his progress toward the Zion above.

I would live another year if it be my Heavenly Father's will; and yet I would not live to sin, and fall and reproach my Saviour and his blessed cause. Better die than live to no good purpose. I would live till my work is done—cheerful when it is most arduous, and grateful for strength according to my day. But I would not be afraid to die. Shall the child desire to be away from his Father's house? Shall the traveller, already weary, choose to have his stay in the wilderness prolonged? It were a sad sight to see a Christian die with regret—to see him go home as if he were going to a prison. O let me think much and often of my heavenly home!

"Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me!
When shall my labours have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?

Jerusalem, my happy home,
My soul still pants for thee;
Then shall my labours have an end,
When I thy joys shall see."

Let me, then, often climb the mount of contemplation, and prayer, and praise, and there try to catch a glimpse of the glory to be revealed, and get my cold heart affected with a view of its yet distant endearments. Love to God, communion with God, devotedness to God, these are the foretastes of heaven. If, through the cares and duties of secular life, I cannot preserve an invariable tendency of mind toward that holy world, let it be a more habitual and frequent tendency. I feel the sorrows of this guilty insensibility, this languor of spiritual affection, and long for those hallowed moments when the meltings of contrition, the fervours of desire, the vividness of faith, and the hope full of immortality, shall shed their sacred fragrance over my spirit, and make me pant for heaven. Nor let it be a transient emotion, kindled by some momentary excitement, or awakened by some impulse of the imagination, but marked by all the ardour of passion, and all the constancy of principle.

Spirit of the Redeemer, shed abroad thine own love in this poor heart of mine, and thus

seal to the day of eternal redemption! Let me greet every truth, every providence, every meditation that shall invite me to more intimate intercourse with heaven. Let me dwell upon the communications sent down from that blessed world to cheer my fainting spirit, and revive my courage by the way. Let me welcome those messages of Divine Providence that are designed and adapted to intercept my constant view of earth, and bring the realities of eternity near. Let me grieve at nothing that makes me familiar with heaven. Let me never mourn when some little stream of comfort and joy is dried up, and I am driven more directly to the fountain. Let me take a fresh departure for the land of promise from the beginning of this new year. I would fain look upward with a more steadfast eye, and march onward with a firmer step. Nor would I lose sight of the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, but go where it goes, and rest where it rests.

And who—who will remain behind? Who will be content to have his hopes bounded by the narrow scenes of earth? Go up, fellow-traveller to eternity; go up to some selected eminence of thought, where the splendours of the holy city shall break upon your view. This world is not *your* home any more than mine. It cannot

comfort *you* more than it has comforted me. You may be called away from all its scenes as soon as I. Your journey to the grave may be shorter even than mine. Nay, *this year* thou mayest die!

SOMETHING NEW FOR THE NEW YEAR.

"ALL THE ATHENIANS AND STRANGERS WHICH WERE THERE, SPENT THEIR TIME IN NOTHING ELSE, BUT EITHER TO TELL, OR TO HEAR SOME NEW THING."

THE curious disposition of the Athenians has been generally considered as a matter of reproach—but unjustly, I think, except in the excess to which it was carried. They did nothing else! Curiosity has often been the means of introducing the gospel, with good effect, into new places; and in the instance above cited, though some mocked, others clave unto the preacher, the Apostle Paul; among whom was Dionysius, the Areopagite, and aftewards an eminent apologist for Christianity, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them. A spirit of inquiry is always friendly to religion, when

properly conducted. The hearers commended in the New Testament are not those who received the doctrine of the Apostles without hesitation or examination, but those who searched the Scriptures daily to see if these were so. For this reason the believers at Berea were more noble than those of Thessalonica.

The decrees of councils and of synods may perish in the furnace, but divine truth will stand the fire like gold. The want of curiosity to examine has often proved the greatest obstacle to the introduction of the gospel. Faith comes by hearing, and if men will not hear, how shall they believe? It is the supposed novelty of the gospel which often gains the first attention; and when it is preached with fervour and affection, it seldom fails to excite wonder and admiration. Its tidings are ever fresh and ever new. To the reader, however, I do not mean to recommend the gospel as a novelty, but I have some new things to suggest at the commencement of a new year, which I hope will be well and prayerfully considered.

1. Let us inquire what new providences at this period particularly call upon us for praise and prayer. In public life ask, What new thing God has done to our country, and the world? What new calamities he has removed, what new

dangers he has delivered us from? What new favours he has conferred, and new blessings bestowed? In private life also, Which of us has not experienced new providences calling upon us for gratitude or humiliation? But I leave a blank . . . . . let the reader fill it up from his own circumstances and experience.

2. What news have we received respecting the propagation of the gospel at home and abroad? At home, into what new places has the gospel been introduced? Where has it been revived when languishing? Where is it now calling for assistance and support? What news have we from abroad? Do the poor benighted heathen cast away their idols, and renounce their caste, to receive the gospel? Do Mohammedans exchange their Koran for the Bible? Do the Jews at last begin to look upon Him whom they have pierced, and receive him as the true Messiah? Do the errors and corruptions that have been incorporated with Christianity for so long a time in the Greek and Romish churches begin to be dissolved and disappear before the brightness of Christ's coming, and the power of his Spirit. Is there nothing new from the land of Luther, and of the Reformation? Are there no signs of their turning to the Lord,

to worship him in the faith and spirit of the gospel?

3. What new plans of benevolence and public utility have been lately started? Sunday-schools may have lost their novelty, though by no means their usefulness. Education is becoming more general; the children of the poor as well as the rich, enjoy its benefits. What new incitements and new attractions are held out to induce children to come to the Sunday-school? The Bible, the Missionary and the Tract Societies are travelling hand in hand through the world. Many are running to and fro, and knowledge is increasing. May we not hope that the period is not very distant when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters do the sea. At least, we ought to pray for its approach and labour to hasten it in its time. To a kingdom founded upon truth, and to be filled with knowledge, the increase of literature and science (truly so called) must in every department be advantageous. Let the Prince of this world bind his subjects in chains of darkness as he is bound. Christianity is a system of light and liberty, and its children love the light, and rejoice to see its beams, whether they shine upon the domes of its temples, the walls of its academies, or the cottages of its poorest population.

While I have commended the Athenians for their curiosity in their inquiries after novelty, I would not reccommend my reader to do nothing else. Inquiry should be the spring of action; and after learning what is done, and what is doing, the next question should be, What shall we do? Is the temple of the Lord building? Are the walls of Zion being repaired? O, give me a trowel, that I may lay a brick or stone. Let every man build before his own house. If I cannot build, let me assist and encourage the builders; or if I can do nothing else, let me at least join in the general shout, as it progresses—Grace! grace unto it!

A NEW-YEAR'S GIFT.

THANKS BE UNTO GOD FOR HIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.—2 *Cor.* ix. 15.

THE new year has been generally regarded as a proper season for giving. In some places a valuable improvement is made by using it also as a season of forgiving. A custom of calling indiscriminately at each other's houses, without ceremony, on a New-Year's day, affords an opportunity to persons who have taken mutual offence, so as to produce a temporary alienation,

to put an end to it by exchanging visits at that season. I have known many disagreements thus terminated, and the fact may suggest to some persons a profitable hint. But whether giving or forgiving be the subject, the text here prefixed affords the most powerful motives to a suitable improvement of the season. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

It includes the essence of all evangelical truth, and the sum and substance of all spiritual graces. A gift is a totally different thing from a bargain. To be generous in the one, we must be careful in the other. I remember once reading of a new-made doctor of divinity in the University pulpit at Cambridge, who assured his audience that by giving to Addenbroke's hospital, they would secure to themselves eternal life. The assembly was splendid; it was the elite of the realm; heads of houses, noblemen and gentlemen, commoners—gown, town, and country had contributed their prime at the commencement of a term, attracted by the sweetest charms of vocal and instrumental harmony. I felt, therefore, some curiosity to know what a congregation so able, had been willing to sacrifice to the preacher's earnest appeal, and I ascertained that it was under £5. Neither did this greatly excite my wonder. The doctor had not ventured to fix

the minimum price of eternal life, and his customers wished to make the cheapest bargain possible.

No, no, my friends; you dare not bargain with God, either for spiritual or temporal blessings. You know that whatever he bestows upon you is an unmerited gift. But beware in your benefactions against bargaining with fellow-creatures. Seek not reputation. Expect not returns of gratitude. Do all things heartily and of good-will, as to the Lord, and not to men. In all our contributions to benevolent objects, and our liberality to the poor, we are not thereby to purchase eternal life. Perish all such gifts as the ground of acceptance with God! They are to be regarded as the fruit and evidence of faith in Christ. This liberality, springing from divine grace in our hearts, will relieve the wants and excite the gratitude of the poor saints; it will glorify God the giver of all good; it will adorn and recommend the gospel of Christ; and through the prayers of the suffering saints thus relieved, the abundant blessings of Heaven will descend on our souls. But let us ever keep in view that our kindness to the poor bears no conceivable proportion to the kindness of God in giving his beloved Son for our redemption. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Contemplate first the gift of God, and secondly the duty of man. Here mark the nature of the gift of God; it is the gift of his beloved Son. Jesus Christ is emphatically the gift of God. The prophets foretold him as such. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." As the Son of man, Jesus was born; but as the Son of God, he was given. Jesus describes himself as such. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The apostles announce Jesus as the gift of God, and declare that he is given as the only Saviour. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. The apostles further declare the Jesus is given as the Author of eternal life, and this life is in his Son. "He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." "For the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." In a word, Jesus is that gift of God, which insures and includes all other gifts. He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things to enjoy.

Mark, next, the excellence of the gift of God. It is unspeakable—it is unspeakable in its source,

in its value, in its character, in its application, and in its effects.

Its source is unspeakable. This source is the love of God. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Jesus is the gift of Divine Love. Who can tell *why* God hath loved? Who can calculate *how* God hath loved us? or who can comprehend the beginning or the end of the love of God in Christ Jesus? Who can tell its duration or its perfections, its tenderness or its strength? "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." In creation, the love of God may in some sort be measured, and in providence the love of God in some degree may be estimated; but the love of God in redemption surpasses all calculation—it is infinite, inconceivable, unspeakable! God is love, infinite and perfect love; this love is manifested only in the redemption of sinners. In this was manifested the love of God, as if it never had been manifested in anything else before. In this was manifested the love of God toward us because that God sent

his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Angels, who always view the face of our Heavenly Father, stoop from their throne in glory to contemplate and to adore the manifestation of redeeming love in Christ crucified.

Its value is unspeakable. To form some faint idea of the value of this gift, consider the divinity of the Redeemer's person, and the depth of his sufferings. Jesus Christ is truly and eternally God; he wears all the names of God; he possesses all the attributes of God; he performs all the works of God; he receives all the worship of God; he is the Maker, Preserver, Redeemer, and Judge of the world; he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; he is the King of kings, and Lord of lords; he is the King of saints, and the King of glory; he is the fellow and the equal of God; he is the true and the eternal God—God over all, blessed for ever! Men are commanded to honour him as they honour the Father; and when he bringeth his first-begotten into the world, the Father himself saith, "Let all the angels of God worship him." Jesus was truly God, but Jesus became truly man; he grew up as a tender plant out of a dry ground; he was born in a stable, and laid in a manger;

he passed through the helplessness of infancy, the infirmities of childhood, and the labours of youth, and when arrived at manhood, he had not a place where to lay his head. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Through life he was despised and persecuted. At death he experienced every kind of distress. Satan troubled him, men crucified him, God forsook him. His agony in the garden was tremendous; and while his soul, under the burden of our sins, was sorrowful even unto death, his body sweat great drops of blood. One disciple betrayed him, another denied him—all, in the time of need, forsook him. He was bound as a thief; led away as a malefactor; false witnesses swore away his life. His judge pronounced him innocent, and then, with marvellous inconsistency, sentenced him to die. His cheek was smitten with rods; his face was spit upon; his temples were pierced with the crown of thorns; his back was ploughed with scourges; his hands and feet were fixed with iron spikes to the cross; he was raised on high, a spectacle for the astonishment of angels and for the unfeeling gaze of cruel men. His burning thirst was tantalized with vinegar and gall; his last prayers were turned into ridicule, and his dying groans were converted into mockery. His soul, in the last

extremity of anguish, was deprived of the refreshing presence of his Heavenly Father. What mind can conceive the meaning, or what tongue can rightly utter the words of that bitter cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Let any man now attempt to reach the grandeur of the Redeemer's person; let him afterwards endeavour to fathom the depth of our Lord's sufferings; let him then strive to unite and combine these two conceptions—a sufferer so infinitely great and holy, and sufferings so inconceivably varied and tormenting—and he will find that no created mind can embrace a subject so vast; that neither human nor angelic powers can estimate the value of the gift of God in sending his beloved Son to die for sinful men. Overwhelmed with such views of Divine love, and sinking in the effort to comprehend them, we can only exclaim, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

Its character is unspeakable. All wisdom, mysteries, and blessings unite in Christ crucified. Who can declare his generation? Who can comprehend his incarnation? Who can understand the wonders of his person, or tell the preciousness of his atonement, the perfection of his righteousness, or the prevalency of his inter-

cession? From everlasting to everlasting, yet born in time; dwelling in heaven, yet abiding on earth; truly God, yet truly man; in himself the most holy, yet by imputation the chief of sinners; honouring and magnifying the law of God in every part, yet degraded and punished as if he had despised all its authority and broken all its commands; the fairest of ten thousand, yet without form and comeliness; full of grace and truth, yet oppressed by violence, condemned by falsehoods; crowned with glory, yet covered with shame; the only beloved of the Father, yet suffering the wrath of God; the Prince of life, yet dying on the cross; the Author of all goodness, the fountain of all glory, and the source of all power, yet expiring on the accursed tree; as most weak, wicked, and wretched of mankind, dying between two thieves, yet giving a throne in paradise; sinking into the tomb, yet opening the kingdom of heaven for all believers; rising when he fell; conquering when he seemed overcome; destroying death, even when he died; was buried and sealed in the sepulchre, yet bursting the bands of death, and uttering as he rose, the triumphant shout, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Besides, Jesus Christ displayed, in full exercise and in perfect harmony, all the attributes

of the Godhead—justice in punishing the offence; mercy in pardoning the offender; holiness in honouring the law; truth in fulfilling the promises; infinite wisdom and infinite love, in reconciling God and man—all appear in Christ crucified, the gift of God. But who can describe a character so various, and yet so harmonious; so condescendingly merciful, yet so truly awful; so full of mysteries, yet so full of truth; so declaratory of the glory of God, yet so conducive to the everlasting welfare of mankind? So many and such bright rays of majesty and mercy meet in the gift of God, that no eye can endure its splendour, no tongue can tell its glory—it is unspeakable!

Its application is unspeakable. The gift is so great and so precious, so suitable to the state, and so sufficient for the wants of man, that it is marvellous that men do not desire to receive it. On the other hand, the natural heart of man is so corrupt, so contrary to holiness, so fond of earthly things, and so full of enmity against God, that it is equally marvellous if any sinner do receive the gift. But some do obtain it. It is effectually applied to the sinner; its application is free. Jesus invites all, and casts out none. Jesus is the fountain of happiness, and he loudly cries to all, "If any man thirst, let

him come to me and drink." Jesus tasted death for every man. His blood cleanseth from all sin. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; yet Jesus saves freely, not for goodness or merits, but according to his mercy and grace.

Its application is spiritual. Though offered to all freely, the Holy Spirit alone can effectually apply the gift of God. Of ourselves we can neither feel the need, nor know the value, nor desire the application of the salvation of Jesus Christ: all this is the work of the Spirit. "The Spirit of truth," says Christ, "shall receive of mine and show it unto you." They who receive Christ become the sons of God, and the sons of God are all born of the Spirit; for, "Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Its application is incomprehensible; for in what manner the Holy Spirit operates on the soul of man, and renews him in the image of God—in what mode he first shows to the sinner the need of a Saviour, and then enables the penitent to lay hold on Christ Jesus, we know not. "The wind bloweth where it

listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." But though the Spirit worketh in secret, he works with power. He can effect in an instant what no human reason nor mortal eloquence effect. He can suddenly break into the iron heart of a gaoler, and force him to cry, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He can gently open the devout heart of a Lydia, and she will listen with faith and joy to the preaching of Christ crucified. He can gradually reveal Jesus to the humble inquirer as the pearl of great price, and make him part with all to procure the Saviour.

Sometimes the influence of the Spirit, like a flash of lightning, darts instantaneous conviction on a careless soul; at other times, like the early dawn of the morning, it gradually disperses nature's darkness, and increases unto the perfect day. Sometimes, like a hammer, it breaks the rocky heart to pieces; at others, it descends like the dew, and gently melts the heart into penitence, and gradually moulds it into the image of God. Sometimes, like a sword, it pierces through the inmost soul; at others, like the balm of heaven, it soothes the troubled breast, and heals the wounded heart.

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. How the Spirit works we cannot tell; but this we can boldly declare, that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost. We know not how the tree is made fruitful, but we can see the fruit hanging on the branches. We know not how the Spirit applies the blood of Christ to the conscience, or forms the image of Christ in the heart; but we can see the fruits of the Spirit and of righteousness in the temper, conversation, and conduct. On the whole, as to this point, the gift of God is freely offered to all, and all, on the peril of eternal ruin, are commanded to receive it; but why some receive and others reject it, why the gospel is to some a savour of life unto life, and to others a savour of death unto death, we can neither explain nor comprehend. This, however, is not an opinion, but a fact; and all attempts to explain this momentous fact, if not positively injurious, will certainly be in vain. It is unspeakable—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Finally, its effects are unspeakable. If we receive the unspeakable gift, if by faith we are partakers of Jesus Christ, we shall be delivered

from the ruins of the fall, from the misery of sin, and from the bitter pains of eternal death; and unless we can count the countless ages of eternity, and describe the indescribable torments of never-ending punishment, this deliverance must be unspeakable. If we are partakers of Christ, we shall be partakers of a divine nature, our minds will be enlightened, our hearts renewed, our tempers sanctified, our conduct reformed and holy, we shall be pardoned and justified; we shall have that peace which passeth all understanding, that joy which is unutterable, and that peace which is full of glory. The gift of God will enrich us and bless us through all time and through all eternity; it will be to us our light in darkness, our treasure in poverty, our comfort in sorrow, our friend in adversity, our protection in persecution, our support in sickness, our life in death, our song, our glory, and our crown in heaven. Its effects on earth and in the soul are described by the most sublime acts of Omnipotence—by creation, for ye are created anew in Christ Jesus—by the resurrection, for ye are risen in Christ. Surely a gift which produces such blessed effects, which is illustrated in its operations by the mightiest acts of infinite power, must be an unspeakable gift. If we receive it now, we shall receive

eternal life hereafter. Grace and truth always come with Jesus Christ. If we receive his grace, we receive an infallible pledge of his glory. His grace will make us meet for those pleasures which are at God's right hand, and put us in possession of the everlasting inheritance reserved for the saints in heaven; but eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him and receive his Son. Surely then, a gift which insures a glory which never fades, and leads to a happiness which no mind can conceive, no tongue can utter, must be an unspeakable gift. Weak must be every effort to illustrate this astonishing subject. For what mind can comprehend that which has no bounds? What imagination explore the unsearchable riches of Christ? What tongue express that which is unspeakable? In whatever single aspect we view this gift—in its source or value, in its character, application, or effects—it is vast, glorious, and unspeakable. When we combine the various rays of its excellency, we are oppressed with its majesty and overwhelmed with its glory, and feeling more than saints or angels can utter, we fall down and adoringly cry, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable

gift!" The Church below and the Church above, the saints on earth and the saints in heaven, unite in this bright song of thanksgiving; and could we sing "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" loud enough to be heard in heaven, the saints before the throne with triumph would thunder back the song, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

What then, in view of all this, is the duty of man? It is to thank God for the gift of his Son—"Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift." Let us thank God with the gratitude of our hearts. Jesus Christ brings with him a pardon for every sin, a cure for every disease, a deliverance from every enemy, a supply for every want, a comfort for every trouble, a support for every trial, a title and a meetness for every temporal and for every eternal blessing. If, therefore, we have received the gift of God; if we are partakers of Jesus Christ; if he has pardoned our sins, and healed the diseases of our souls; if he delivers us from all our spiritual enemies, and richly supplies all our wants; if he comforts us in every trouble, guides us in every difficulty, stands by us in every danger, and supports us in every trial; if he has given us his grace, and promised us his glory; if through his blood and merits we have a title to heaven,

and through the operation of his Spirit we are made meet for his kingdom; if this be our blessed experience, our hearts will feel more gratitude than our lips can express. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." Let us thank God with the praises of our lips. Though no tongue can fully express the loving-kindness of God in giving his dear Son, yet every one who is a partaker of the unspeakable gift will devoutly and loudly praise the Lord; though he cannot do what he would, nor praise God as he ought, he will do what he can; though he cannot give utterance to the grateful feelings of his heart, he will make the attempt; he will declare what God has done for his soul; he will praise God in the secret adorations of his Son; he will praise him in his family, praise him in the social circle with them that fear the Lord, and praise him wherever he goes; especially will he praise God in the public congregation. "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp;

I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people," and magnify thy name. "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!" But when the death of Christ is by the Church shown forth and celebrated, when the believer is invited to partake of the emblems of the body and blood of his suffering Lord, then, with a heart swelling with gratitude, and lips overflowing with praise, "Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy." Thanks, thanks, thanks unto God for his unspeakable gift!

Let us thank God by the obedience of our lives. No gratitude of the heart, no praises of the tongue, no regularity of delight in the worship of God will avail without universal and constant obedience to his holy laws. Gratitude may be the flame, prayer and praise may be the incense, but obedience must be the substance and the glory of the Christian sacrifice. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." When a believer keeps the commands of Christ, he best shows his love to Christ. When, through faith in Christ, he does justly, loves mercy, and walks humbly with God; when he lives soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, he then offers the best thanks to God for his unspeakable gift.

Acts of obedience are acts of thanksgiving. Works of faith evidence our sincerity and recommend religion. The fruits of holiness glorify our God. Hereby is my Father glorified, when ye bear much fruit. If ye then have received the gift of God, and have tasted that Christ is gracious, if Christ be precious to your souls, and the love of God be shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost, then your hearts will be grateful, your lips joyful, and your life obedient; and heart, and lips, and life will unite in one ascription of praise—"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

DAILY THOUGHTS

FOR THE FIRST MONTH OF THE YEAR.

1. BEGIN the year well; with enlightened meditation, seriousness and prayer; relying implicitly on the care and kindness of the God of immutable fidelity and love, and it will proceed well and end well. You know not what may occur this year; but leave all with Heaven. God will dispose everything wisely and for your ultimate good.

2. The first Sabbath in the year! Let it be

a memorable one. Let it be one of special humility, special reflection, special gratitude and praise. Be determined that it shall not pass away listlessly and unimproved. Be resolved in God's help, that a singular blessing shall result from its engagements and services. Commune with God, preëminently believers at the table of the Lord this day, it may give a tone to all the succeeding Sabbaths of the year.

3. At the commencement of the year let the inquiry be searchingly proposed—How are we living? Is it in the exercise of faith—in the spirit of holiness, under the influence of prayer? or in the neglect of everything which is spiritual and divine—everything associated with our happiness and salvation? This is a most grave inquiry for every reader; let it be seriously pondered upon.

4. During this year, and indeed every year, let us confide implicitly in nothing of a sublunary nature; if we do, we shall indubitably be disappointed, and shall act with the utmost weakness and folly. Mutability is identified, essentially interwoven, with everything that is terrestrial. We can securely and infallibly depend on no object but what is heavenly. Where is your dependence fixed? You are not relying, are you, on any of the streams of earthly com-

fort?—if so, how greatly will you be disappointed!

5. This day, every day, let me walk with God as Enoch did, as Noah did, as Abraham did, and the day—indeed every day—will be one of pure affections, of elevated thoughts, of sublime resolves, of holy desires, and heavenly communion. If you thus walk, dear reader, you will partake of angels' food, and cherish the angelic spirit—yes, and more, you will possess the temper of the Son of God himself.

6. As the days revolve, do you not feel how great is the weakness of man? That excellent old writer, Mr. Shomer, observes, "He cannot carry his own wishes without falling under them. He cannot prosper in his designs without being changed in the temper of his mind upon every success. If we were to have our wishes uniformly gratified, we should be ruined." Do you feel, reader, in this manner?

7. Human life, it cannot be too earnestly remembered, is too precious to be trifled with, much less frittered away. By multitudes, however, it is wantonly and criminally squandered without reflection and without remorse. A long life passes away with many without any regard to its object and end; without any improvement whatever. My soul, how is it with thee? What

report does conscience furnish? Is life properly estimated? Ever consider that its due appreciation is of transcendent importance.

8. It is a contemplation the most impressive and wonderful, that our present existence, instead of being the whole or the greater part of our duration, is in fact comparatively nothing. It is only a drop when contrasted with the ocean; a moment when viewed in connection with eternity! Our future existence will be boundless, undefinable, inconceivable. We shall ever be in happiness, or ever in misery. What a thought! Let us then, at all times, rightly and profoundly estimate our present existence; but we can only do so when we associate it with immortality.

9. The second Sabbath in the year! How did we value the first? Did we afresh consecrate ourselves to God, and resolve to walk with him more humbly, to serve him more cheerfully, and to persevere in his ways more vigorously than ever? Was it a profitable Sabbath? Was it one of much spiritual enjoyment? Let us properly regard *this* Sabbath, and remember that every Sabbath should be improved by us as carefully as though it would be our last.

10. The acute Cecil observes: "We seldom discern mercy in its first approach. Does it prune away the finest branches, nip the loveliest

buds, and cover the earth with blossoms? Yes, this is frequently the Divine arrangement; and it is the arrangement of Infinite Mercy. It must be remembered that the life of the whole often depends on the removal of a part. Mercy will then wound in order to heal. Regard to the fertility of the tree will strip off its most flourishing suckers." Always endeavour, dear reader, to discern mercy in your afflictions; nothing will more sustain and tranquillize.

11. As the professed disciples of Christ, you should be studious at all times to realize a better country—that is, a heavenly. It will operate most beneficially and powerfully. It will wean you from the present world; it will stimulate you in the prosecution of your journey; it will compose and strengthen you under your daily and hourly trials; it will induce you only to pitch your tent here, and to be continually looking for the celestial city—the city which hath foundations. Is this your character?—are these your views?—are these your anticipations?

12. In passing through life, how often we need the rod, the discipline of Providence, painful yet paternal. Still, let us remember that the rod has a *voice*. When God strikes, he addresses us. Under such circumstances let us attend with peculiar earnestness to his commu-

nications. The voice is that of the best Friend, and of the sagest Counsellor; indeed, it is the voice of Heaven. Never let us put our finger in our ears when the rod is speaking. How many do this! They will not hear!

13. Consider, in all your engagements, and all your contemplated movements, dear reader, what a span of life, even though protracted to its utmost duration, lies between you and the grave! And if you would appropriately estimate its value, review your past life; read the heads of its history at a rapid, though not a trifling glance, and measure by this moment the future.

14. By the lapse of months and years that vagueness and indefiniteness are removed, and that silent and imperceptible movement which would otherwise accompany the flow of time. By the revolving year we are enabled in some degree to ascertain the point, as to this mortal life, on which we stand; and certain measures are afforded by which accurately to compute the sum of the past, and to calculate by experience the probable amount of the portion yet to come. As the months roll away, carefully observe the revolution.

15. How startling, reader, is the reflection, and how it ought to impress every heart, that

the end of all things is at hand, even though myriads of years were interposed between us and the last day! Our doom may be sealed in an instant—in the twinkling of an eye it might occur; and when it does, it will be fixed and irreversible.

16. The third Sabbath in the year! How quickly Sabbaths come, and how swiftly they depart! We can scarcely say they are here, before they have vanished. Their opportunities are soon gone; their enjoyments, their privileges, their priceless blessings are soon realized, and the world, with all its cares, temptations, and dangers, speedily follows. How necessary, then, is it to redeem the time of the Sabbath!—not to lose a moment, as every one is golden; not to neglect an opportunity, as every one is most precious; not to undervalue a single privilege, as each may be regarded as a pearl of great price.

17. During the present year, if life be prolonged, desire to improve in everything that is excellent and divine. Pray habitually that you may improve; strive earnestly that your improvement may be visible to yourselves and others; and be assured of this, that it will be apparent. By God's help you will, you must succeed, if you are determined that the end of

your desire may be secured. It is the idle, listless, irresolute professor, who does not prosper.

18. Let us this year look around in the world, and see how little comparatively is done. How much mind lies waste for want of culture! By attention, by labour, by skill, it might be most productive. How many immortal beings, in relation to their moral, their religious, their undying welfare, are utterly neglected! Ministers, parents, teachers, members of churches, we must all arouse, and work for God! Let none of us stand with folded arms. In reference to ourselves, let us endeavour to correct what is wrong and improve what is right; and in relation to others, let us aim at lessening the sum of human misery, and augmenting the amount of human happiness.

19. Be exceedingly anxious this year to cultivate a grateful spirit. Consider what God has done for you already; what he is now doing, and what he has engaged to do. Every year, as it comes and as it rolls away, should find you more thankful. What personal mercies are imparted; what domestic comforts are afforded; with what relative blessings are you crowned! How mercies accumulate day by day! And they are all bestowed on the most undeserving.

Never expect that God will give you that for which you will not thank him.

20. Let us attend to the service of Christ this year more seriously than ever. It should be our continual employment, our habitual study, our deep solicitude, our absorbing desire. What can I do for my Lord? should be, dear reader, your unceasing inquiry: and not only must you ask the question, but perform the work.

21. It is important to bear in mind that you may have many difficulties and trials during the current year. Anticipate them; be armed against them, and when they come, meet them in the right spirit. And remember, Christian reader, that there could be no difficulty in your way if God did not permit it. Besides, do you not owe much to difficulty, much to trial, much to danger? Would character have been formed or matured without them? Would high Christian attainments and excellencies have been developed without them? Impossible! Go on then, *determined to endure.*

22. "It is my way," said a master spirit, "to suffer no impediment, no love of ease, no avocation whatever, to chill the ardour, to break the continuity, or divert the completion of my literary pursuits." Let every Christian, in relation to the labours, the trials, the conflicts of

the religious life, exemplify the same temper. It is and will be found invaluable. By heroic energy like this, anything can be done. There is in such a spirit the surest pledge of success.

23. The fourth Sabbath in the year! Let it be the best in the month; the holiest, the most spiritual, the most profitable, the most heavenly; and in order that it may be, you must abound in prayer, and delight in prayer. Those Sabbaths are always the happiest and the most advantageous, when we are most anxious to hold communion with God our Saviour at the mercy seat. Regard it as an indubitable principle, that no Sabbath will be connected with a blessing if prayer be neglected, or offered in a cold and apathetic manner. Pray more on the Sabbath, and God will instruct and bless you more.

24. Peruse the Bible more this year. Read it more devotionally, with greater simplicity and docility of mind than ever. There is no book like the Book of God to aid us in discharging the duties of the year, to succour us amidst the temptations of the year, to support us under the afflictions of the year, and to carry us through all the changes of the year. By every Christian the *Bible is read too little.* Will you, avowed followers of the Redeemer, old and young, pay

closer attention to the word of God during this year than any preceding one?

25. Ministers, parents, teachers, earnestly seek the conversion of sinners this year! It is a noble and heroic work; but what difficulties are associated with it! Weigh it well. Go about it in the wisest, firmest, humblest manner. Attempt nothing in your own strength; observe all the impediments in your way, and make ample preparation to overcome them. Look up to the Spirit of God to assist you and grant you a blessing; then collect your energies, strain every nerve, pierce to the centre, strike to the heart. Will you be the instrument, reader, of converting a soul this year?

26. Bishop Hall observes, with his usual point and sagacity, that "a man's best monument is his virtuous actions." Take care, dear reader, that you are helping to rear this monument daily, and doing it without noise or ostentation; building it up in the most solid, yet in the most quiet and unpretending manner.

27. Let it be with each one of us a leading object throughout the entire course of life, not only to preserve what knowledge we have acquired, but also to increase it—and especially in relation to scriptural knowledge. And if we only carry out this principle from day to day, it

is surprising on what a fund we shall be able to draw in twenty or thirty years. Let every reader add daily to his stock of Christian knowledge.

28. During this year do not be too anxious; it is unnecessary, injurious, and improper. Regard the will of God, follow the directions which he has given you in his own word, and then leave all the rest to him. He will take care of you; he will supply your wants; he will regard your prayers; he will fulfil his promises; he will disperse your fears.

29. A great writer has given us a fine direction, "Fill your little sphere with brightness and happiness." And if it were thus filled, how pure and sunny would be the radiance!—how beaming and lasting would be the joy! Will you, reader, endeavour this year to fill your sphere in this manner?

30. Some years have five Sabbaths in the first month, and this is one of them. Let it be to you an emblem and a foretaste of that everlasting Sabbath in heaven. Look well to your hope for eternity this year, as it may be your last. See that it is purely scriptural in its character; that it is well-grounded; that it has the warrant which the word of God will sanction; that there is about it no deception whatever.

Always ponder the solemn remark of a sage and holy writer, "There is a hope that is like the spider's web—as curiously wrought, as easily destroyed."

31. In aiming to do good this year, you must not suppose that all will be tranquil and pleasant; that there will be no obstructions in your way. No great work, remember, can be done without much opposition. Never, then, look for peace while you proclaim war and carry it on. In doing good to souls, Satan will give you no rest.

The *last* day of the month!—how solemn the thought! It will soon be the last day, the last hour, the last moment of life! How do you feel in the prospect of eternity? Are you ready for your change? Are you pressing towards the mark of your calling in Christ Jesus? Will you reach heaven? Will you wear the crown? Make it your great business *every* day to be prepared for the *last* day of life; and then let the days, the months, the years, roll on. They will only be bringing you nearer the kingdom; the rest which God has promised, and the boundless inheritance which you shall eternally enjoy.

THE FIRST SABBATH IN THE YEAR.

"The year is born!—the year is born!—
The past is numbered with the dead!
What thoughts arise on New-Year's morn!
What days—what friends—what hopes have fled!
New time arrives—new works to do—
New cares—new dangers are in view."

THE return of every Sabbath is a most interesting period, especially to the person who loves God, who loves the truth, and who loves holiness. It is connected with the most animating duties; with the purest and most grateful enjoyments; with the most kindling and delightful associations. There is something, however, preeminently interesting connected with the first day and the first Sabbath in the year, and it ought to inspire emotions correspondingly pleasurable as well as powerful.

The return of every Sabbath is, also, the arrival of a period in our individual and domestic history, which is peculiarly solemn. Viewed aright in the light of the Holy Scripture, and in the light of eternity, it is clothed with the deepest solemnity; but the *first* Sabbath in the year is one which is solemn in a preëminent degree. Thoughts are then awakened—feelings

are then excited—impressions are then made—and recollections are then induced, which rarely occur at any other period.

Every Sabbath, moreover, is a time, an occasion of marked importance and significance; the events contemplated, the doctrines recurred to, the obligations imposed, the assemblies convened, the objects regarded, the responsibilities involved, combine in attaching to it the utmost value and moment; but the *first* Sabbath in the year is associated, unquestionably, with peculiar, with undefinable preciousness and importance. All who value the soul, who recognize the surpassing solemnity and moment of the revelations of Christianity, and who are impressed, as they should be, with the lapse of time, the brevity and fragility of life, the nearness, and the vast, tremendous issues of the future judgment, will, beyond question, think and feel in this manner. Let us then, on the arrival of this hallowed and memorable day, the *first* Sabbath in the year, cherish those sentiments, those affections, those anticipations, which ought to be called forth, and which must be awakened in connection with the experience and history of every intelligent and sincere Christian.

It is a pertinent and significant inquiry, which we should do well, at this season, to ponder in

the most serious manner: "How should the *first* Sabbath in the year be spent?" It is a *special* period, it therefore involves special duties—should induce a special train of thought and feeling—and should be connected with the formation and carrying out of special resolves.

The first Sabbath in the year should be spent in the exercise of careful and solemn *retrospection.*

Recollection, diligent, comprehensive, and minute, should be brought into exercise. We must look back—there must be a survey taken of our past history, and especially during the preceding twelve months. We must review the conduct of an infinitely wise and gracious Providence towards us. We must attentively observe the path in which the Lord our God has been leading us; and, if the retrospection of our history for the past year be appropriately pursued, what thoughts will be elicited! what emotions will be inspired! what impressions, deep and most advantageous, will be induced! How many circumstances and events will occur to us of wants supplied, of light shed, of direction furnished, of strength vouchsafed, of support in trial administered, of deliverance from imminent and formidable peril bestowed, of special answers to prayer in the closet and the family granted!

So that the review will be most consolatory, impressive and beneficial; while the mind is informed, counselled, and stimulated, the heart will be sensibly and powerfully affected.

Let, therefore, the first Sabbath in the year be a season of spontaneous and most grateful retrospection, and it will be one not only properly spent, but of great and lasting benefit.

The first Sabbath in the year should be entered on with deep *humility*. All pride must be checked, all self-complacency must be discountenanced, all self-confidence must be brought down. In a word, all boasting must be excluded. When we look back, and review our history during the brief period of twelve months, how much is there to humble us! How much to occasion shame and self-mortification! There is, confessedly, no room for self-praise; no ground for self-conceit or exultation. Quite the reverse. We can only place our hand on our lips, and our mouth in the dust, while self-prostration, and complete self-humiliation are indulged before God. During the past year how many things has the Lord seen within us and in connection with us, which have been most unworthy and most improper! How many circumstances have we, if any of us are real Christians, seriously and bitterly to deplore!

What coldness in religion! What indifference in prayer! What deficiencies in love! What worldliness of thought and feeling! What mixture of motive in celebrating divine worship! How little profit derived from the means of grace! What defective zeal! What partial and flagging obedience! What feeble and trifling efforts made to glorify the Saviour! How little self-consecration to the noblest and best of beings! Is this an erroneous statement? Is it an exaggerated representation? By no means. Every believer in Christ Jesus, when dwelling on his past conduct and history, observes, "The thousandth part cannot be told. The sins of *omission* alone, during one year, are not merely great and accumulated, but they are perfectly boundless!"

The first Sabbath in the year should be spent in the exercise of *unaffected* and *lively gratitude.* No temper, at such a season, is more becoming and beautiful. No disposition, moreover, is more important and indispensable; and, we would add, is there any spirit, at such a period particularly, which should be more natural for us to unfold?

On the first Sabbath in the year every disciple of Christ, every child of Providence, every Christian pilgrim, should be busily employed in

raising his "pillar of memorial" to heaven, and in engraving on it the memorable inscription—"Ebenezer!" singing joyously and thankfully, "Hitherto has the Lord helped me!" If we are not grateful at the *close* of the year, and at its *commencement*, we spontaneously inquire, When *ought* we to be grateful, and when *shall* we be grateful?

Let, then, the first Sabbath in the year be one marked by peculiarly preëminent gratitude. Let the altar be early raised; let the offering be readily placed on it; let the flame of love and devotion ascend to heaven; and let the shout of joy and thanksgiving be heard. This is the temper which God will approve; this is the spirit which the Saviour will appreciate and honour; this is the conduct which the Holy Spirit will ratify and bless. Take up your harps, therefore, ye servants of the Most High, on the first Sabbath morning in the year, and on them, in the sweetest and loudest strains, celebrate the praise of the Lord God of Israel!

The first Sabbath in the year should be spent under the influence of *pensive and tender emotions.*

If the mind be properly constituted, and if the heart be suitably influenced and affected, these, at such a season especially, will be awakened.

At such a time, if at any period at all, reflection will be induced, memory will be exercised, and the heart will be "made soft." The close and the beginning of the year are, commonly, seasons of deep pensiveness—not, perhaps, gloomy or melancholy—but quiet, gentle, profound, and beneficial.

When we rise on the first Sabbath morning in the year, and survey the events of the past twelve months, how much is there to render the mind pensive! What changes have we ourselves experienced! What alternations in our domestic history! What sorrows have we felt! What losses have we sustained! What bereavements, perchance, have we realized! What tears have we shed! What strange vicissitudes have we undergone! And yet, amidst all, how kindly have we been succoured!—how wondrously have we been comforted and preserved!

We go to our seat in the sanctuary on the first Sabbath morning in the year, and look around—but how much is there to affect us! How much to call forth deep and pensive emotion! There may be another minister in the pulpit; the voice of our late beloved teacher and guide may be silent in the grave. We survey the congregation, and cannot but observe what changes death has effected in the short period of *one* year! We

look for some dear Christian friends and associates, who used to sit near us, and commune with us at the Lord's table—but they are gone! Their bodies are mouldering in the grave; their spirits are with God. We may even miss some from the very pew in which we have long worshipped; perhaps some choice friend, some valued relative—it may be a husband, a wife, a brother, a sister, or a child. What a tale of vicissitudes in our congregations the circumstances and events of every year will furnish!—and therefore we cannot wonder that pensive and deep emotions, at such a period as the first Sabbath in the year, is spontaneously awakened. If we think and feel aright, we cannot be cold, careless, flippant then. Even the very lapse of time itself is enough to make us all pensive and serious.

The first Sabbath in the year should be spent in the *spirit of prayer*. It should be entered on under the influence of a devotional temper; and during the whole of the day this disposition should be specially cultivated.

At no time is fervid prayer more becoming, more valuable, more necessary, than at this; and if ever we "wrestle" with "the Angel of the Covenant" for a blessing—a large, rich, full blessing—for a blessing on ourselves, our fami-

lies, our ministers, our respective churches, our country, the cause of God throughout the world, we ought to do so on the first Sabbath morning in the year. What necessities will require to be supplied! What wisdom shall we need! What strength shall we demand! What guidance, consolation, succour, and deliverance shall we find indispensable during the year! To what duties shall we be called—in what situations shall we be placed—by what dangers shall we be surrounded—in what perplexities shall we be involved—to what temptations shall we be exposed—through what accumulated and extraordinary trials may numbers have to pass before the year reaches its close! and therefore, dear reader, if ever you pray believingly, earnestly, affectionately, confidingly, importunately, do so at the beginning of the year. Let your special petitions be directed to heaven for clearer views of the gospel—for stronger faith in Christ—for warmer love to the Saviour—for more glowing zeal in the service of Immanuel—for more complete victory over the world—for readier and more unfaltering obedience—for more affectionate and entire consecration to the Lord of glory.

Let there be special supplications offered at the commencement of the year that your fami-

lies may be crowned with the tokens of Divine regard—that all your children may "live before God." Let the Church of Christ be peculiarly remembered. Pray warmly that its light may increase—that its dross may be removed—that its value may be more appreciated—that its power may be more felt—that its influence may be more widely extended—that its blessings may be more richly enjoyed.

Real prayer, fervent, continued, acceptable, successful prayer, on the first Sabbath in the year, will carry along with it signal tokens of Divine care, tenderness and love, during the ensuing days, weeks, and months of the year; but if there be little prayer at this season, if our petitions be few, cold, feeble, what can we expect throughout the year, but a blight—a moral and spiritual blight?

The first Sabbath of the year should be spent under the influence of *strong and holy confidence in God.*

This temper should peculiarly mark and beautify us at such a season. It will meet with an ample recompense. It will be associated with all that can enrich, ennoble, and honour. Our confidence in God must be vigorous, enlightened, unfaltering. There must be no mistake, no

hesitancy, no deviation. God will have our full reliance, if we are to receive a large blessing.

Put then your entire trust in the Omnipotent, the all-sufficient Jehovah, especially at the beginning of the year. Repose strong confidence in him, that your daily bread will be given—your daily raiment be supplied—your daily comforts be continued—your daily sorrows be mitigated—your daily prayers be heard. Can you withhold this confidence at *such* a period? It will be impossible, if you think and feel as you should. It will be exercised with all that simplicity, affectionateness, and strong faith which distinguish the children of God. Let your motto on the first Sabbath in the year be the following—you cannot have one more suitable or expressive—"I will trust, and not be afraid."

The first Sabbath of the year should be spent with an enlightened and vigorous determination in relation to *the future.*

There must be intelligent and holy resolves formed at such a period; and, in reliance on Divine agency, they must be carried out; practically and conscientiously exemplified during the year. And there must be one determination, in particular, which each Christian must, on this first Sabbath in the year, deliberately

utter, gratefully and joyfully renew—"I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." I will live as in His presence. I will conduct myself as being under his immediate inspection. I will place myself under his control. I will devotedly implore his guidance. I will so walk as that, by Divine grace, I may approve myself before him. Every day and every hour throughout the year this fine resolve should be carried out. For who knows what may happen during the year? What clouds may gather—what enemies may assail—what perils may environ—what changes may occur? How completely is the future concealed from us! Besides, the present year may be *the last* to some—indeed, to many who read these pages. Prior, and it may be long prior to its termination, they may be in eternity, and be made acquainted with the secrets, with the solemn, the awful disclosures, of the invisible, the eternal world! Their state may be fixed—their destiny sealed for ever!—yes, for ever!

Begin, therefore, dear readers, the year well. Let it not be commenced without much meditation, much prayer, and much simplicity and firmness of resolve; and especially be determined humbly to walk with God, and before God. Then the days, the weeks, the months of

the year, as they revolve, will bring to you rich and heavenly blessings. You will be prepared for every duty; you will be fitted for every change; and, whether you live or die during the year, you will be safe, you will be happy. All, in relation to eternity, will be secure, all will be well. Improve, improve, we beseech you, the first Sabbath in the current year, and let your devout and appropriate petition be the following:

"Where Thou shalt settle mine abode,
There would I choose to be;
For, in thy presence, death is life,
And earth is heaven with Thee."

A HEAVENLY USE OF EARTHLY THINGS.

THOUGH I now enter on a new year, I know not, except by the calendar, the congratulations of friends, or the ringing of bells, that this is the commencement of a new era of time. For what is there in the face of nature to remind me of it? The weather is unchanged, the sun gives no new light. I feel myself the same; my friends look as usual; and unless I were aware that at some period the sun must be considered

to renew its course, and that the same objections might be made to whatever season we fix upon, I should censure the custom of calling this the commencement of a new year.

But when I enter on the first day of my heavenly year, all will be new indeed. A brighter sun will then rise upon me, and commence an eternal course; for there I shall see it in all its glory, and be for ever with the Lord. Haste, glorious morn! Rise, Sun of Righteousness! let me see thy fresh beams gild the tops of the everlasting hills, shedding new lustre on all around! There the faces of all I behold will be illumined by those beams, and will appear glorious as so many suns, by reflecting the splendour, the purity and loveliness of it. Will not this be a new-year's day? Alas! my former years have often been obscured by clouds, which concealed my Saviour from my view, and have presented to me a thousand objects which reflect no ray of the Saviour's glory, but are all covered with the dark shadows of earth.

In this also my first day in heaven will be *new*—that its morn will be succeeded by no night. All my former years were made up of nights as well as days. This new-year's day, though hailed with the congratulations, is short and dark, and followed by a night long and

dreary; but I hope to enter on a year new indeed, made up all of day, for I read of a state of which it is said there shall be no night. There darkness and gloom shall, along with sin and death, be completely lost in the sunshine of God's favour, and mortality be swallowed up of life.

On this new-year's day I meet many a kind friend, with benevolence in his eyes and good wishes on his lips, saying "A happy new-year to you." But when I enter on the new period of my existence alone, how much more warmly will I be welcomed; how far higher gratulations will salute my ears! Ministering spirits will meet me on the morning of that day, and give me joy of my first day of holiness and bliss. Their eyes will speak the benevolence of their hearts; their salutations will proclaim how ardently they wish me blessed for ever. They will not, however, ask for me many happy returns of that day; for one such admission into Christ's presence will stamp with bliss a whole eternity. Then I shall enter into the temple of God, to go no more out for ever. Here the best wishes of friends are but impotent. While they ask for me many new-years, I may have seen my last; and that which they wish so happy may prove disastrous, for it may be wasted in

vanity or defiled by sin. But every welcome that shall meet me on my entrance into heaven will prove prophetic. Every friend that greets me there will be a minstrel, every minstrel a bard, each bard gifted with far distant sight, and all their inspiration will portend my bliss.

Sweet as it is loud will be the burst of such gratulations, but still more delicious and more mighty the welcome of the Eternal King; for as my times are in his hand, and he dispenses days and years according to his pleasure, how beatific his voice when it bids me enter into the joy of my Lord, and spend such a year as he himself now spends.

Sweet is the existence the once afflicted Jesus enjoys. Since he rose from the dead, we ever after have kept Sabbath on that first day of the week; and when he entered heaven, his attendant spirits demanded entrance, saying, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." Heaven celebrated its new year of consummate bliss. He now sees the travail of his soul, and is satisfied; and when he admits me to share his bliss, I shall ask no more returns of new years, for my years will never grow old. What eternally satisfies Christ, will never pall upon my taste. Bliss, ever new to him, will

retain all its power to entrance, exalt, and satisfy my soul. Shall I then say, Away with the new years of earth; I want not many returns—the fewer the better, until I see my Lord? No! all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. But I will say, Welcome, thrice welcome this current year, for thou art nearer to Christ and to heaven than the last year! Welcome all the days that yet await me, for Jesus sends them to bear me on their wings to the bosom of my Lord! But welcome most last year, for that will prove my best; handing me forward to the presence of Him whom my soul longs to see, that I may spend eternal years in his presence, where there is fulness of joy; and at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.

BEGINNING THE NEW YEAR WELL.

"Another year has flown away—
Eternity has swallowed all:—its scenes,
Its changes, sorrows, joys—all which saddened
Or enlivened, are gone, and gone for ever!
How must *this* commence?"—*Voice of the Years.*

In entering on a new era of our existence, we commence a season of deep and peculiar solem-

nity, especially when we contemplate the duties which it may involve, the trials which may be realized during its continuance, and the bereavements which may be sustained; it therefore behoves us, as reflective and responsible beings, to approach it and enter on it under the influence of pensive and serious emotions, and not with the thoughtlessness, the flippancy, and the merriment of the fool.

The period, moreover, when we enter on another revolving year, and that year comprehending so much which is eventful to us in the present life, and bearing so closely, and, indeed, inseparably on the future and eternal existence to which we are looking forward, is one associated with great and awful responsibility; and we cannot commence it aright without a sense of that responsibility being most powerfully felt, and prompting to the performance of every incumbent duty, as well as to bold and courageous grappling with every difficulty, temptation, and adversary. In the providence of God we are spared to witness the flight of the past year, and to hail the arrival of the present; and it is of the utmost moment that we should form and express our individual and solemn determination, namely, that we *will begin the year well.*

This resolution is most proper and wise;

nothing can be more becoming, rational, and just. This determination is most expedient and desirable—nothing can be more connected with our happiness, or conducive, in every sense, to our best interests. This resolve is most important and necessary, that character may be exemplified, that conduct may be regulated and improved, that excellence may be attained and increased. It is a resolution, however, which must spring from enlightened sentiments, which must be guided and moulded by the word of God, and which must be expressed and maintained, not in our own strength, in dependence on our own unaided resources, but in simple, in unhesitating reliance on the omnipotence of that Spirit, who by his grace will fit us for every scene, prepare us for every labour, uphold us under every trial, whatever its pungency.

Now, to begin the year well, we must commence it with *solemn retrospection*. We must look back. We must carefully review our past history. We must impartially scrutinize our past conduct. We must "remember the way in which the Lord our God has been leading us," however rugged, intricate and trying that way might have been felt or deemed by us. We must attentively mark the dealings, the varied arrangements of Divine Providence, and see how,

with everything pleasing or painful, under every aspect, luminous or dark, all events have been necessary for us, and all designed for our good.

We must recur to the scenes of the past year, so chequered, and frequently so gloomy and lurid; we must dwell on the temptations of the year, often so powerful and seducing—on the difficulties of the year, marked frequently by extreme breadth and intricacy—on the afflictions, the sicknesses of the year, not only numerous and painful, but sometimes, perhaps, almost overwhelming. We must review the mercies of the year, and observe how our tables have been supplied, how our lives have been preserved, how our families have been blest, how our fears have been removed, and how every desirable communication has been imparted.

We must consider how we have been aided while discharging the duties of the past year—personal, domestic, relative engagements—whatever might have been their arduousness, complication, or importance.

We can never commence the year properly without this solemn retrospection, and especially without looking back to observe and lament the multiplied deficiencies, irregularities, and defections before God, with which we have been

chargeable, and to admire and adore his forbearing mercy in "healing our backslidings," "pitying our infirmities," and forgiving our sins.

To begin the year well, we must commence it with *large and enlightened inquiries.* The mind must be drawn out; the soul must be awakened; great thoughts must be elicited and enkindled. No little, paltry sentiments must be entertained, no mean, insignificant questions must be proposed. As the years are rolling over us, their significance and grandeur are continually increasing, and hence it devolves on us to endeavour to meet their claims, and to act worthily of their character and importance.

In entering, then, on the year, let us take large and comprehensive views; let us propose intelligent and great inquiries, that we may unfold a character befitting us at the present advancing period in our ecclesiastical and national history, and do something worthily in this age of progress.

Let each reader seriously ask, "What am I purposing to do, if life be prolonged during the present year? What as a minister? What as a parent? What as a teacher of the young? What as a master or mistress? What as a brother or sister? What as a child? What in any capacity—as a Scripture reader, tract dis-

tributor, a visitor of the poor and sick? What fresh plans can I form to benefit my family more effectually? What additional arrangements can I make to subserve the best interests of the church and congregation with which I am identified? What enlargement and impetus can I give to any efforts which are making for the intellectual and moral elevation of my country, the evangelization of Europe and the world? Knowledge must be more widely diffused; infidelity must be more vigorously met; error in all its forms must be more decisively counteracted; Romanism, whatever its seductions or appliances, must be more wisely and powerfully resisted. What can I do, or what do I intend doing in this great, this gigantic undertaking? These are fitting and significant questions to propose and urge at the commencement of another year; and it is incumbent on each right-minded, each sound-hearted person, to submit them to his understanding, his judgment, his conscience, as in the sight of God, and in the prospect of his awful account at the last day.

To begin the year well, we must commence it under the influence of *a devotional spirit.* This is indispensable on the part of every individual, whatever his position in society, to its right beginning. There must be no mistake here, no reluct-

ance here, no neglect here. While we want the mind to be aroused, the best efforts to be put forth, we are preëminently anxious that the heart should be moulded and sanctified by the Spirit of God. We want the affections to be raised to heaven, and to be enkindled with fire from the celestial altar. We want God to be emphatically sought, his aid to be implored, his presence and blessing to be enjoyed in all things. We therefore need, at the present crisis in our history, a general and fine development of the spirit of prayer. All, at the beginning of the year, must pray, and we must all *pray more.* Our supplications must be more frequent, more direct, more fervid, more agonizing. We must wrestle, and continue to wrestle in prayer, until we have the blessing. What light can be scattered without prayer? What error can be checked without prayer? What enemies can be discomfited and put to shame without prayer? How can individuals be blessed without prayer? How can sinners be awakened and brought to God without prayer? How can the peace, the holiness, and the enlargement of the Church of Christ be secured without prayer, and *much prayer?*

Let us, in entering on the year, prefer more simple, fervent, and concentrated prayers than we have ever yet done. May the true "Spirit of

grace and supplication" rest upon us in all our characters, all the relations of life, and for the general good! then, a special benediction from Heaven will rest upon us, upon all our plans, efforts, and instrumentality. The *prayer of a whole people*, at the commencement of the year, must issue in copious and signal blessings during its continuance, and throughout succeeding years.

To begin the year well, we must commence it with *unlimited submission to the will of God.* There must be no distrust of his care, his fidelity, his goodness. There must be no want of confidence in his wise and paternal administration. There must be no dissatisfaction with his allotments or arrangements. There must be no murmuring against his procedure. We cannot commence the year wisely and well unless this spirit be felt and displayed. God must be submitted to from the first day of the year to the last; and our submission must be enlightened, unqualified, and devotional. It must be the submission of disciples to their Teacher, of subjects to their Sovereign, of children to their wise and benignant Father in heaven. We know not what clouds may encircle us, what difficulties may perplex us, what dangers may environ us, what enemies may assail us, what changes may depress us during the year; but

this we know, that if submisslon to God be exercised, and if our submission be enlightened, child-like, and uncomplaining, we shall be able to exclaim, "All is right!—all is well, and all *must* be well!—the end will fully justify the Divine arrangements and procedure." Begin the year, then, dear reader, animated and imbued with this fine temper, and you will realize, while it advances, its blessed, its glorious results—results which will exert the happiest influence, not only on your minds and characters, but prove of the utmost importance to your families and to the Church of God.

To begin the year well, we must commence it with a determination, if life should be prolonged, for *the advancement of the glory of Christ.* We must take no lower aim; we must propose no inferior object; we must be prompted by no other motive; we must be impelled by no other desire. The hours of the year, the days of the year, the weeks of the year, and the months of the year, as they successively glide away, are all to be consecrated to the Redeemer, that his name may be magnified, that his honour may be subserved, that his grace may be exalted, that his purposes of infinite love and mercy may be accomplished.

This is the right use of life; this is its true

and sublime improvement. The question should be with each reader, at the beginning of the year, "What can I do for the Saviour while it continues? How may I diffuse his gospel, extend his kingdom, and be the instrument of still more widely disseminating the blessings of his free salvation? This is to be my grand business, my uniform, my *one* aim."

When the year is thus begun, with a fixed and enlightened resolve to glorify Christ Jesus, it becomes a year of prayer, a year of effort, a year of usefulness, a year of sublime and holy ends. Much is anticipated, much is done, much is enjoyed. How is it with you, dear readers, in these respects? Are you all disposed, all qualified, all determined to glorify the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, at the commencement of another year? and are you intensely anxious to spend the year in such a manner as that "He who in all things is to have preëminence," may be supremely honoured? Happy the person who can at once respond, "This is my sincere, my high, my only aspiration."

Now, if we begin the year well, in the manner, and governed by the spirit and principles to which we have referred, we shall realize great and precious advantages. For example—we

shall have the testimony of a good conscience during the year; and this is no ordinary, no insignificant blessing. The testimony of an approving conscience, as the months revolve, will be clear, direct, full, and most satisfactory; and, as Matthew Henry observes, "It is a good thing to have the bird in the bosom singing sweetly."

If we thus begin the year, we shall be prepared for all the duties and events of the year. The duties to which we may be called this year may be more diversified and arduous than ever, sometimes extraordinary; still there will be seasonable and requisite qualifications bestowed, as they successively recur. The events of the year may, in many respects, be new, be stirring, and most important; still, we shall be fitted for their approach, and for their daily and continual realization, while we see the hand of God in all.

If we thus begin the year, we shall be divinely supported amidst all its trials; and this will be to us no trifling boon, no ordinary blessing, to have the mind kept in a tranquil and happy state, when experiencing one affliction and another; and to find, as one circumstance of distress and sorrow and another may be occurring, that there is a fountain of living consolation to

which we can repair, and the pellucid and celestial waters of which we can continually drink.

If we thus begin the year, we shall be secured amidst all the perils of the year. Whether those perils may be seen or unseen; whether they arise from enemies without or within; whether they spring from the world or the devil; whether they may be connected with our position in the family, or society generally, we shall be perpetually shielded by the providence of God, and fortified by the grace of God; that providence will succour us invariably; that grace will preserve us effectually.

And be it remembered, that if commencing the year under the influence of the spirit inculcated and recommended, we should be removed by death before the year terminate, we shall only be translated to that world where

> "Life's unbroken joy begins,
> And life's unending Sabbath reigns—
> The peace and rest of heaven."

The journey of mortality will only come to a close. The stream of the present shadowy existence will be crossed, and the wide, unbounded ocean of immortality will be entered, where we shall realize a fulness of bliss which will never be interrupted and never cloy.

When the above considerations are regarded, how important does human life in all its phases, all its aspects, all its duties, all its temptations, all its difficulties, all its discipline, appear! How solemn its beginning, its continuance, its close! How pregnant with great issues; how inevitably resulting in a tremendous and changeless doom! How necessary to be seriously contemplated; to be soberly anticipated, as its years approach; to be diligently prepared for; and for the end, the awful end, to be weighed!

> "Life begun is solemn;
> But what awe surrounds it, when its close
> Draws nigh! Then, all shadows flee away,
> And everything is real—is awful!"

How true is the remark, that "our life is full of mysteries, though its events seem so vulgar and of every-day occurrence!" There is mystery in its beginning, in its duration here, in its ends, in its impulses, its sympathies, its cares, its vicissitudes, its temptations, and the endlessly chequered scenes associated with it. Life, with which so many trifle, which multitudes never seriously regard, is the most solemn and mysterious thing imaginable. And how does it behove every intelligent and immortal being, as it is passing so rapidly away, to inquire, What is my

life? How am I spending it? How and where will it end?

See to it, we beseech you, reader, that when with you life shall be finished, the *work* of life shall be done, its true business executed, its true end accomplished.

"Life is the time to serve the Lord."

Properly and continually improve that time. Ask now, at the commencement of the year, before your eyes turn away from the pages you are reading—"Should I die during the year will eternity be prepared for? will the goal be run? will the prize be gained? will the rest of heaven be enjoyed? will the crown of celestial glory be mine to wear, and that, too, for ever, in the presence of God and the Lamb?" Let this year, we entreat you, dear reader, be one of preëminent devotedness to God.

Join, we request, we implore you, in the following simple but beautiful aspiration:

"O let our lives, great God, breathe forth
A constant melody;
And every action be a note
In the sweet hymn to Thee!"

LOOKING FORWARD.

"Mark how my time speeds on!
I cannot check its course. It hurries by
With more than lightning flight. O may the thought
Impel me too; and while upwards my gaze
I turn, onwards let me press!"

THE past has been a memorable year—most memorable: one, in the history of thousands of families, and of the entire community, which will not be soon forgotten—can it ever? A year distinguished most signally by the Divine goodness, the blessings communicated by which have been the most varied, abundant, beneficent, surprising; and one characterized also by the Divine judgments having been abroad—"the pestilence that walketh in darkness—the destruction that wasteth at noon-day—terror by night—the arrow that flieth by day." The mortality prevailing in some portions of our country during the last year has been not only great, but fearful. Many countenances have been saddened, many hearts grieved—and we wondered when "the plague" would cease, when the pestilence would check its ravages. God, however, in the fulness of his mercy, has heard prayer.

The dire visitations of heaven have been removed. Sorrow has been turned into joy, the tokens of grief into the expressions of praise; and *now* we can "sing of mercy," rich, sovereign, abundant mercy, instead of talking of judgment. Let us therefore enter on the present year aright, with no gloomy, dejected, unbecoming emotions. Let the voice of gratitude be uttered. Let the song of thanksgiving be sweetly and loudly expressed. Let the incense of the deeply grateful heart be poured forth, and let it ascend immediately to heaven, to evince how we think and feel at the commencement of another momentous era in our history as a community—in our existence as a guilty, but highly-favoured nation.

While we look back, however, let us not do it despondingly, whatever the mortality which has prevailed, the bereavements which have been experienced, the desolations which have been felt in so many quarters; let us also *look up*, under the influence of the most devout and enkindling emotions. Let the soul ascend at once to that gracious and divine Benefactor, who has done for us "such great things and marvellous, whereof we are glad;" and let us tell Him that we are determined to "show forth his praise."

And moreover, while we look up with every appropriate sentiment and feeling, let us be resolved to "*look forward.*" Let the eye of faith penetrate the future. Let the anticipations of lively hope and confidence be cherished; and let us enter this year cultivating the spirit of Christianity, adhering to the principles of the gospel, and clinging to the expectations and assurances of the New Testament, more vigourously and more earnestly than ever.

Let us look forward to the duties, the events, the movements of the year with becoming *seriousness*, with all the gravity of reflecting, accountable, immortal beings; with all those feelings of appropriate solemnity awakened, when we contemplate our character, our position, the uncertainty of our tenure below, and our boundless and awful destiny. Let there be no trifling disposition—no volatile frame of mind, which is as little as unworthy. A dignified seriousness is the spirit with which we should enter on the year.

Let us look forward with *gratitude*. Let us be thankful for past interpositions, so decisive, so frequent, remarkable; and believing that expressions of the Divine goodness and mercy will be continually vouchsafed to us during the year. When we dwell on the Divine encouragements

and assurances which are afforded, as year after year returns, we cannot be too grateful; and, as the Lord is "crowning the year with his goodness," and his "paths are dropping fatness" upon us, let songs of unmingled and universal thankfulness be celebrated.

Let us look forward with *confidence*. We shall not be disregarded; we shall not be unsheltered; we shall not be forgotten. The wants of the year will be supplied; the difficulties of the year will be removed; the dangers of the year will be averted; the afflictions and bereavements of the year will be chastened and sanctified; the illnesses and diseases of the year will be mitigated, healed, and rendered useful, and all desirable blessings for the year will be freely and munificently imparted; therefore look forward with confidence—that confidence will not be disappointed—it cannot be put to shame.

Let us look forward with *humility*, from a conviction of our utter unworthiness. There must be no undue opinion of ourselves, no self-inflation or self-complacency; indeed, there must be an absolute renunciation of self.

Recurring to the Divine visitations of the *past* year, let us humble ourselves deeply before God our Maker and our Judge, *this* year. Let him see that we are truly and profoundly humble

when our ignorance is contemplated, when our unworthiness is felt, when our deficiency and little progress in the right way are considered.

Let us look forward with *submission*. We know not what may occur this year, what "cup of bitterness" may be put into our hands; what dark and portentous clouds may surround us as a nation; what changes, great and paralyzing, may be realized; what instances of mortality may present themselves before us, to sadden or surprise. Still, let us be submissive, unfeignedly and completely submissive. No complaints must be heard; no fretfulness must be indulged; no unyielding temper must be cherished. We must bow to the yoke, submit to the chastisement, acquiesce in the Divine purpose and arrangement. We must acknowledge before God that all is right, that all is good, that all is necessary.

Let us look forward in the *true spirit of prayer*. We must commence the present year with a highly devotional temper, and that temper must characterize and sanctify us throughout the year. It will prepare us for every duty, fit us for every event, sustain us in every sorrow, and fortify and cheer us in the prospect of every change. If we want to prosper this year we must pray more. Prayer must be distinguished by greater intelligence, fervidness, point,

comprehensiveness, frequency, power. As a community, we should learn, especially from the events of the past year, to abound more in prayer; to cry more intensely and mightily unto God, that he would appear, deliver, and bless. As a nation, we are yet comparative strangers to wrestling and prevailing prayer.

Let us look forward with *simple reliance on Divine agency*. Let us implicitly confide in the Holy Spirit, that we shall be aided when we need succour; that our resources, mental, moral, and religious, will not fail; that strength from above will be communicated "equal to our day"; that we shall be fitted for every emergency; that we shall be directed in every difficulty; that we shall be shielded in every danger; that we shall be preserved in every hour of perilous temptation; that we shall be consoled in every situation of trial, and find that God, our Saviour, is dispersing all our fears. This unhesitating reliance on Divine agency will be a source of exquisite support and comfort to us during the year, and will be a powerful incentive to every holy and important duty.

Let us look forward *with hope:* not with depression—much less, with despondency. This would be most undesirable, most ungrateful, most improper, and also most paralyzing. God

has done great things for us already, and he will do more, and perhaps greater and more marvelous still; therefore we must hope, hope strongly, hope on continually. We must sow in hope, plan in hope, pray in hope, labour in hope, sorrow in hope, wait on God privately and publicly in hope—assured of this, that our hope will not be disappointed. It will be realized largely and delightfully, and probably in a much happier and more glorious manner than we ever anticipated, or could have expected; for God loves to dissipate the fears, and not only to gratify, but to surpass the hopes of his people, especially in times of peculiar difficulty, exigency, and trial.

This is the spirit, dear reader, with which we should begin the year. We should cherish no other temper, exhibit no other principles, form and carry out no other resolves. If these are our predominating sentiments and feelings, the present year will be a year of progress. It will not be one during which we shall remain stationary. This cannot be the case. We shall pursue steadily our onward course; we shall make decisive and noble advances. Character will be more luminously and beautifully unfolded. Our religious experience will be marked by a greater breadth, elevation and power. Our his-

tory, as a nation, will be socially, morally, religiously, much more striking and encouraging. If the spirit we have inculcated be displayed, it will be a year of effort—effort of every kind; effort in every department; effort for God; effort for the glory of Christ our Lord; effort to benefit and bless our fellow-creatures. We shall determine to labour, and not to be indolent—not to trifle. Our labour too will be freely, vigorously, regularly performed—performed from love, having the highest objects in view.

If the sentiments we are anxious should be cultivated are exemplified, this year will be a year of usefulness. We shall not plan, labour, strive together in vain. Prayer will be heard, confidence will be honoured, active effort will be crowned with success. Many, through us, will receive a blessing. The year will not pass without some tokens, and perhaps most significant, of the Divine approval being furnished us.

If the temper recommended be everywhere exhibited, it will be a year of happiness—great and exalted happiness. "The peace of God" will pervade the mind, the joy of the gospel will tranquillize and animate the soul. We shall have the felicity arising from the Divine presence and regard; and, whatever the occurrences, the fluctuations, the difficulties, the sorrows of the year,

we shall be "kept in perfect peace, staying the mind" calmly and supremely on Heaven; and on the paternal wisdom, benediction, and unceasing care of our God, our Benefactor, our Redeemer.

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

"ONE thing is needful." These are the words of Him who spake as never man spake. If we can form to ourselves any conception of the majesty, yet the benignity—the mildness, yet the force of our Lord's reproof to Martha, let us endeavour to lay it to heart.

He evidently contrasted the one indispensable object with the many things by which Martha's attention was divided, and her temper agitated. The fault is too common, even among those of whom we hope things (as of her) that accompany salvation, to need explanation. Her immediate temptation to it was much serving. It is the only instance in which the family of Lazarus is adverted to by any of the first three Evangelists, and it might be the first occasion on which our Lord was accompanied to Bethany by all his disciples. The family was respect-

able and hospitable. The Jews from the festival at Jerusalem crowded to see one who was raised from the grave. Much provision might be needful, but Martha indulged needless anxiety, perhaps, about their variety, their delicacy and their arrangement. Is nothing like this ever apparent at the hospitable meetings of Christian friends. A substantial, but more simple entertainment would, doubtless, have been more acceptable to Christ, and ought it not be so to his people. Profusion cannot but impede beneficence. It is unlikely that Mary would have neglected to help her sister in anything that was really wanted; and still more so if she had, that our Saviour would have commended her. She was imbibing his invaluable instructions, while Martha was bustling, fretting, and complaining against her to their dearest and greatest Friend. How must Martha have been humbled, and Mary encouraged by his award.

Mary, then, it appears, had chosen this one thing needful, from which her sister's attention had been diverted by many things. Let us rejoice that it was not to be taken from her; for assuredly no more shall it be taken from any, who choose it as their portion. But what is it? We cannot, with our Lord's personal

friends and followers, sit at his feet and listen to the gracious words that always flowed from his lips. Neither tould any of them at all times enjoy that privilege; but Mary's conduct, at that time, was the effect of her habitual choice of the one thing needful, and it is well when *ours* equally tends to the attainment of it.

Pious and learned men have variously defined the one thing needful; but the difference are those of sound, rather than of sense. Admitting men to be in a lost condition, salvation is the one thing needful for all. Its foundation was laid before that of the world, to which it related by God's election of grace, to save sinners through the sacrifice of his Son, who, in the fullness of time, became incarnate, gave himself for us, to endure the death of the cross, and bore the chastisement of our peace, that we, through his stripes might be healed. But these facts, like all in the performance of which we have had no share, can only be beneficial to us by the effect which our belief of them produces in our mind and conduct. To this purpose, the grace of God as manifested by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, is no less needful than it was, as manifested by the sacrifice of the Son of God for the pardon of all past offences. This, therefore, to each of us is the

one thing needful, that the love of God should be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. This drew Mary to the feet of Jesus, to listen to his doctrine; the want of this gave scope to the cares and passions of Martha.

Let us try ourselves by this test. Have our minds ever been harassed and perplexed by controversial reading, till the Scriptures themselves seemed to us either unintelligible or of doubtful authority? What was it that at once banished all our anxieties on the subject, and left us as incapable of doubting the truth of Scripture as our own existence?—the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

In times of imminent danger, what has raised us above personal fear, and turned our dismay into a joy unspeakable and full of glory? and while this has been mingled with earnest intercession for others evidently unfit for eternity, yet likely every moment, with ourselves, to plunge into its abyss, what has assured us that our cries and tears for their preservation were accepted of God?—His love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

In weeks of motionless confinement to a bed of disease, what has incapacitated us to form a wish for relief, or for any change from what we

then were?—the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

When overwhelmed by sudden distress, or loss attended by permanent and even irreparable damage—prostrated before God in dismay and terror, by the violence of these unlooked-for strokes of his rod—what has said, "Peace, be still: and immediately there was a great calm"? Other things, while these trials continued, you could not be anxious about; no more were you about these, while the love of God was shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost.

But now, perhaps, you find your strength to be perfect weakness. Accumulated infirmities, complicated diseases, have reduced your mind to a state in which it is distressingly agitated; when you can hardly tell the cause, though its effects in the aggravation of bodily diseases is perfectly felt. Such a state is, perhaps, equally beyond help from rational exertion, or friendly consolation; but it is not beyond the reach of the one thing needful. The Holy Ghost can even then diffuse the love of God in the heart, and nothing more is wanted. Let things be as they may, this will assimilate earth to heaven. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access, by faith, into the

grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed." Or our hope of the glory of God cannot be ill-founded, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given to us. We need, infinitely need this; we need nothing besides, for it is the one thing needful.

SPIRITUAL ARITHMETIC.

"SO TEACH US TO NUMBER OUR DAYS THAT WE MAY APPLY OUR HEARTS UNTO WISDOM."

THE science of numbers is extremely valuable, both in the pursuits of philosophy and the business of secular life. It guides the astronomer among the starry fields, and enables him to calculate the magnitude and the distances of the heavenly bodies, and there teaches him the power, goodness, and faithfulness of God. Thus God instructed Abraham to view the heavens. "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he be-

lieved in the Lord (that is, in his power, goodness, and faithfulness,) and he counted it to him for righteousness."

But the important science of numbers is no less applicable to all the purposes of human life, for all our temporal blessings are delivered out to us in number, weight, and measure, and none more sparingly than our *time;* for we never have two moments, much less days, together. Hence the importance of this spiritual arithmetic, that we may "so number our days, as to apply our hearts unto wisdom." To apply our hearts unto wisdom is to enter into the study with zeal and energy, or (in the English phrase) with all our hearts. It is a common expression with students, when they enter on a subject of serious difficulty, that they will apply their brains to it; but the Hebrew idiom is both more beautiful and proper—they applied their hearts to it. Thus the wise man—"Apply thine heart to understanding." The heart is a better tablet than the brain, because it receives the impression deeper, and retains it longer. "My son, keep my commandments; write them on the table of thine heart, and let thine heart retain my words."

Now then let us, with the Psalmist, apply our hearts to wisdom, and especially to this branch of it—calculating or measuring our days.

Let us calculate the number of our days. Let us calculate their uncertainty. Few as the days of man are, how very few of our race come up to the limited number of three-score years and ten. Narrow as is our span, how few fill up that space. The majority of our race die in infancy—at least in immature age. Our cemeteries contain coffins of a span long, and there is no age within a century that is not inscribed on one or the other of our tombstones; and of the living, we may say with Watts,

> "Where is the man that draws his breath
> Safe from disease, secure from death."

Let us estimate the importance of our days, both as compared with the work assigned to them, and the end to which they lead. We are sinners, and these are the days of penitence and pardon. We are ignorant creatures, and these are the days allotted for our instruction. We are labourers, and this is the period allotted for our work—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," says Solomon, "do it with all thy might;" and greater than Solomon hath said, "Work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work." We are to work for ourselves, for we are commanded to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it

is God who worketh in us of his own good pleasure. We are to work for God, knowing that we shall not labour in vain for the Lord.

We are to work for our fellow-creatures, to be not weary in well-doing, knowing that in due time, we shall reap if we faint not. But time is to us chiefly important as it relates to eternity; it is, indeed, a narrow isthmus, but it connects us with eternity. "I paint for immortality," said a celebrated artist, and thus may the Christian say in all that he does. He repents, believes, and for eternity, and if he gives, he gives for eternity; for though it be but a cup of cold water, the Judge himself will not forge it when he ascends his throne. The box of ointment bestowed on Jesus by Mary of Bethany, met the censure of more than one of the apostles, but received the plaudit of their Lord, "Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told, for a memorial of her." It has already been echoed through the known world.

One word more—we need a teacher in this important science. God only teacheth us to profit, and there is none teacheth like him. "So teach us, O Lord, to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

MY MEDITATION OF HIM SHALL BE SWEET.

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Thus David sung, and my soul shall utter her responses to his harp. Sweet indeed should be my meditation on that Being, who comprises in himself all that is venerable in antiquity, whatever is grand in dignity; all that is mighty in power, lovely in beauty, or tender in grace; while He is to me the parent of being, the donor of property, and the spring of bliss.

At the commencement of a new year, I cannot but muse on Him who at first gave me this being, which he continually renews. But, O! what awe and wonder must mingle with the sweetness of my reflections on the name—Creator! For it reminds me that there was a time, and that not very far distant, when I was nothing; I was not; I never had been in existence! A vast eternity had rolled away without me. Ere Time indeed had begun his first new year, God had an eternity above. But even when he had uttered the almighty *fiat*, and countless worlds, with all their diversified inhabitants, had started up, and echoed to his creative voice, "Here we

are, to serve and please;" and when they glorified him for hundreds and thousands of years, I was not among them, but all was to me the blank, mysterious night of nonexistence. At length arrived the appointed moment, to me big with importance, when I was to take my turn of entrance into being; and Omnipotence bade me overleap the vast, the infinite space between an eternal nothing and this wondrous being which I now possess. "He spake, and it was done," and here I am; and though an addition to His works, inconceivably small compared with their magnitude and extent, yet nothing short of Omnipotence could have formed me. And vast must have been the design he had in view when employing infinite attributes to form my mortal frame and its immortal inhabitant. But while my heart throbs with awe at itself, its machinery and motions, and my eye flashes admiration at my hands, when I hold them up to the light, and see the purple hue of the blood which flows in innumerable channels—how simple and easy is that machinery to Him that made it, and is every day repeating the same process in ten thousand instances and ten thousand forms! Mighty Being! what streams of creative influence are incessantly flowing from thee, through every world thy hands have formed!

But my soul, this ethereal principle, the intellectual inhabitant and guide of this material frame, with what reverence and delight must thou meditate on the parent Spirit that gave thee birth and being! If none but the Omnipotent could form one grain of sand, or spire of grass, how glorious were the exertions of that Omnipotence when it formed a spirit whose nature rises high above gross matter; whose mysterious power of thought can dart through the vast regions swarming with glorious worlds; whose conscience estimating moral character, weighing actions, and anticipating consequences, darts forward to a whole eternity of bliss or woe!

Father of Spirits! couldst thou create not merely one such invisible, intangible being, with all its mysterious nature, and all its mighty powers, but have myriads of such productions spring up at thy voice to surround thy throne, and partake of so glorious a resemblance of thee, and shall not these spirits adore thee? But, while I adore, I tremble at the giddy height to which I am exalted, and I repeat with awe the dread sounds—soul—rational—accountable—immortal. For, ah! a sad consciousness of sin reminds me how much these privileges have been perverted, and how com-

pletely they might turn to curses. If I attempt to deprecate thy wrath, due to sin, I shudder lest I should seem to deny the enormity of offence committed against such a Being, whose claims on my reverence, obedience, and affection, are attested by the thundering and united voice of creation. But here my meditations take their sweetest turn. I can own all the extent of my guilt. I can admit how much I have deserved the horrors of thy displeasure, and yet can plead exemption. For the mysteriously grand Creator, the inflexibly righteous moral Governor has become the condescending, the compassionate Redeemer. Then, such a Saviour is mighty to save—is mighty to save as he was to create, or would have been to destroy! For when that Being who could bid worlds swim in infinite space, and maintain them all by a simple volition of his infinite mind, employs the same infinity to recover, to save, and to bless, what may not be expected from his grace?

My heart reposes on thy word, thy testimony of pardon and life through Christ. My soul feels that she rests on the same basis on which the universe is upheld, and her peace, like her being and immortality, passes all understanding. But my meditation is the more sweet when I reflect that thou hast not only pardoned me,

but entered into a friendly covenant with me, and hast bound thyself by oath never to cease from doing me good. I look back through another year, and see thy faithfulness to a covenant "ordered in all things and sure," and muse on all thy loving-kindness and thy truth, till my heart grows warm within me, and my devotion burns, to think that all this vast infinity of being and perfection that dwells with thee is all my own; that everything which the creation displays of activity and efficiency, of might and skill, of beneficence and grandeur, is all pledged to me to be forthcoming in every need, and to be employed throughout eternity to make me blessed. "O God, it is too much!" I am ready to exclaim, but I am checked by thy voice, that says, "Too much, indeed, it might be for thee to expect or receive, but not too much for me to give, for I delight to do exceeding abundantly above all you can ask or think."

If, then, my meditations on thy past dealings are sweet, so shall be my musings over that futurity which thou hast spread out before me. Eternity is so grand that it is awful from its vastness. I shrink, and almost think it gloomy to have the prospect of living for ever, though I feel that my soul shudders at annihilation as a dread abyss. But when I think of eternity with

Thee, it is delightful. With thy society, and that of thy beloved friends, I shall know no solitude. By thine infinite resources, modes of enjoyment shall be found for me which will leave no vacuum in my being or my bliss; and through eternity it shall be sweet to meditate that, upheld by thee I shall never lose myself, my holiness, my heaven; and O, still higher transport, never lose my God!

SON, GO WORK TO-DAY IN MY VINEYARD.

THERE is something very tender and touching in these words. How it should reach, and move, and melt the hearts of our young men, for it is chiefly designed for them.

Young man, hear the voice of God, and live. Perhaps you inquire, "Am I personally addressed, and does God speak to me?" Yes, the address is personal—it is authoritative—it is affectionate. How are you affected? Are you alarmed? Are you penitent? Are you submissive, and obedient to the heavenly call? What say you? O let your language be that of the youthful Samuel—"Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Let yours be the promptitude of the enraptured Isaiah—"Here am I, send

me." If such be the correspondent feelings of your heart, and such your readiness to hear what the Lord shall speak, you will naturally ask, "Am I in the path of duty—in the way of salvation? If not, where shall I discover it?" The reply is at hand, "Son, go work in my vineyard." There is the place of labour, the sphere of exertion, and the post of honour. If you look at your relative connections and your consequent duties; at your situation in society, and the obligations which it necessarily involves, you will see at once where God hath fixed the bounds of your habitation. It is a kind of social or providential vineyard, where your talents and virtues are put to the test, and called into exercise. But you have read of another and yet more interesting sphere of exertion; God has a Church in the world—a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; "for the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel." Apply then for immediate admission into this sacred enclosure. Go, and approach to this vineyard without delay, and as you proceed you will hear a heavenly whisper—"This is the way, walk ye in it." Still press onward, "asking the way to Zion with your face thitherward," and you shall hear the great Teacher sent from God say to you—"I

am the door; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved."

If, after having knocked, the door of mercy be opened before you, it will be natural for you to pause, and inquire with the jailor, "What must I do to be saved?" You will find answers adapted both to your reason and inclination—Son, go *work* in my vineyard, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. You will also perceive that repentance is a work, as the commands of the gospel are, "Repent and be converted; bring forth fruits meet for repentance." You must also perceive that whatever relates to personal and progressive holiness, is a part of the work of this vineyard. The grace that bringeth salvation teacheth us to live soberly, righteously, and godly, to be perfecting holiness in the fear of God, and to follow peace and holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. You will likewise find that the work and labours of love are required of you. Your fellow-creatures have numerous and urgent claims upon you; the household of faith and the great family of mankind are always presenting objects which serve to cherish a spirit of enlarged benevolence and commisseration; and as one has well observed—However inferior our stations or slender our abilities, we have all one talent. How have we employed it? We have

all had some means and opportunities of usefulness. What brand have we plucked from the fire? What naked wretch have we clothed? What child of ignorance have we instructed? In what instance have we resembled Him who went about doing good? who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Do you, indeed, anxiously ask whether the King's business requires haste, and what is the proper season for you to go to work in the vineyard? Reason, and conscience, and revelation reply, *To-day*. The command of the father to his son was doubtless given in the morning, and you are in the morning of your short existence, and is not this the fittest season for active, laborious, self-denying exertion. Whatever claims your parents or relatives, the church or society have upon you, listen to them, weigh them, discharge them to-day. With respect to your own interest, consider that now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. God's language is, "To-day if you will hear my voice, harden not your hearts." And why to-day? Because the day of life is short, and there is much to be done; because it is uncertain, and much may be neglected, and because the night cometh wherein no man can work. *Carpe diem*, you

know, is the poet's advice, and which Dr. Johnson has thus happily paraphrased:

"Catch then, O catch the fleeting hour;
Improve each moment as it flies;
Life's a short summer—man a flower;
He dies, alas! how soon he dies!"

Do you want motive and encouragement? Do you pant for grace, and aspire after glory? You shall reap if you faint not. He that asketh receiveth, he that seeketh findeth, for the Lord is unto all that call upon him, and he hath never said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain." O, my young friend, the desire of my heart is, that He who has granted you a new year, may bestow a new heart and a right spirit upon you, that the day-star may arise upon your soul as the opening dawn, and the blessed presage of everlasting day.

God speaks now to every young man, saying, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard."

REFLECTIONS ON PSALM LXV. 11.

"THOU CROWNEST THE YEAR WITH THY GOODNESS."

It is recorded of the wicked, that they will not behold the operations of Jehovah's hand; when

his judgments are abroad in the earth, they will not see; and when his mercy is eminently displayed, they will remain alike insensible; but those who are savingly enlightened from above, see something of his glory in all the works of nature; they hear his voice in every event of his providence; as affectionate children, they tremble when he frowns, they rejoice when his glory is made manifest.

Sentiments of this kind appear to have impressed the mind of the Psalmist, when he uttered these words. He celebrates the awful justice and the infinite compassion of his Heavenly Father in the former part of this Psalm, and then sweetly concludes with these words: "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing."

May we not take up the words with admiration and gratitude, when we review the mercies of the past year? At its commencement the clouds appeared to gather in blackness all around us; we were ready to fear, lest we should experience cleanness of teeth in all our

streets; the sword of war, God's sore judgment, hung heavy over our land, and peace appeared afar off; and yet, in the midst of deserved wrath, our God has remembered mercy; he has restored unto us this invaluable blessing, and answered the prayers of his people. O! how great is his goodness! He has also given unto us an abundance of the fruits of the earth! He has caused our fields to stand thick with corn, and our valleys to laugh and sing! He has literally crowned the year with goodness.

But let us pursue the subject still further, and behold his goodness in a spiritual point of view: First, as it respects our own souls. How many of our fellow-sinners have been called to appear at the bar of God, altogether unprepared, without an interest in the Redeemer's blood; and who are now suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, without hope of mercy, while we are permitted to continue under the joyful sound of salvation! "Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits, who crowneth us with loving-kindness, and with tender mercies."

Again, let us behold his goodness, as manifested to the Church at large since the commencement of the past year. His glorious gospel

has been extending its benign influences; many sinners have felt its quickening power, who were heretofore dead in trespasses and sins; new temples have been erected for the worship of the true God, where the god of this world appeared to reign triumphant; benighted villages have been visited with the light of life; fresh labourers have been sent forth into the gospel-harvest; missionaries have been preserved amid surrounding dangers in various parts of the globe, while peace attends our Israel. May we not exclaim, with the admiring psalmist, "Thou, O Lord, hast crowned the year with thy goodness!" What sentiments of gratitude, what ardent zeal, what activity in his service, ought these things to enkindle in every one who feels a real regard for the glory of God his Saviour, and the eternal interests of his fellow-men!

What a ground of consolation, also, is the goodness of a covenant God to every real believer, when he considers that the God of providence and of grace is his God, who will crown with everlasting blessedness the acceptable year of his redeemed, and bring them all to his own right hand, where his goodness will inspire new songs of praise for ever and ever!

WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?

How much is included in this short and simple inquiry? It refers to matters of the deepest solemnity, and of the most thrilling interest—matters with which all are in some measure acquainted; but which, alas! very few adequately understand, or properly feel. How necessary is it that we should be taught of God, taught by his providence, his word, and his Spirit, ere we can form a just estimate of life in general, or of our own lives in particular. Let us then unite with the psalmist, in the petition, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Different answers may be given to the inquiry, "What is life?"

Life is the mysterious union and coöperation of soul with body, which originates in Almighty wisdom, and is maintained by Almighty power.

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Such is the account of the origin of life, with which we are furnished in the word of God. How the two component parts of human existence

act and react upon each other, we cannot tell. How the dissolution of the connection now subsisting between them causes death, we know not. Certain it is, in whatever obscurity the matter may be involved, that all life must be traced directly to God. He is self-existent—the only living God—the Author of all vitality in heaven and on earth. Every living creature, from the archangel before the throne to the meanest insect found in this lower world, lives and moves in God. Either must we admit this great truth, or maintain that creatures owe their existence entirely to themselves—a notion which is at once manifestly irrational and awfully dangerous, involving not only scepticism with all its absurdities, but also atheism with all its horrors.

Life is a divine gift, which is held entirely by the forbearance and long-suffering of God.

Scarcely had men begun to live, when they rendered themselves liable to death. "Thou shalt surely die," was the threatening attached to the test of obedience, which God was pleased to appoint to our first parents. "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," was the sentence passed upon them and upon all their posterity, immediately after the fall. And now, whether we look at the human race at large, or at the individuals of whom the great family of

man consists, we behold those who, not only in consequence of original guilt, but also of actual transgressions, are exposed to the righteous displeasure of God. The sentence is passed—the execution of it only is delayed. Alas! how true it is, that "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

Life is the only time in which men have any opportunity of beginning to love and serve God.

"The grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; the living, the living, he shall praise thee." It is in this life that we must acquire the knowledge of God, of Christ, of heaven. If now we remain ignorant of the way of salvation, unwilling to embrace the gospel, we must endure eternal death. Solemn consideration! O that it were powerfully impressed on every heart—"*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation."

"Great God, on what a slender thread
Hang everlasting things!
The eternal state of all the dead
Upon life's feeble strings!"

Life is a scene of mingled pain and pleasure,

in which joy and sorrow are generally found to be mixed together.

Many are the sources of enjoyment which a wise and gracious God has been pleased to provide for his creatures. We repudiate the notion, so insulting to God, that "man was made to mourn." Doubtless he does mourn, but it is not because he is a creature, but because he is a sinful creature; and the effects of sin are so sad, that if we look abroad on the world, we discover the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain, and even the people of God enduring affliction, often of the most perplexing and trying kind. Can we wonder if, under the pressure of bodily and mental, personal and relative trouble, the child of God is prompted to say, "I loathe it; I would not live alway."

Life is an existence which is, at best, very brief, and must soon be surrendered.

In estimating the length of human life, we have only to glance at eternity. What a disparity is there between the few years of which our mortal life is made up, and the inconceivable, immeasurable duration before us. The shortness of life is often declared and depicted in the word of God; the vapour, the dream, the shadow, represent its fleeting, evanescent character. The leaf, the grass, the flower of the

field prefigure its frail and brief existence. The shuttle, the post, the tale that is told, exhibit its swift and rapid flight. How true it is, that "man who is born of woman, is of few days." "The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if, by reason of strength, they be four-score years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

Life is a privilege, the continuance of which is altogether precarious and uncertain.

We know not what a day, an hour, a moment may bring forth. An impenetrable veil shrouds the future from our view. The precise time, and the exact circumstances of our departure hence, God knows; but these are secret things, which belong only to God. The shafts of the king of terrors are directed indiscriminately at the young and the old, the rich and the poor. There is no distinction, no discharge, no escape in this warfare. Death reigns over all men; soon must we die.

"Our life contains a thousand springs,
And dies if one be gone;
Strange that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long."

Life is the precursor to the awful solemnities of death, and judgment, and eternity.

"It is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment." On completion of our earthly career, we must pass through the valley of the shadow of death. The judgment will soon follow, solemn in its circumstances, universal in its objects, righteous in its proceedings, eternal in its determinations. "Behold, the Judge standeth before the door!" And then we must enter on heaven, with all its ineffable bliss, or on hell, with all its unutterable woe. To those who lived to God, who died in Christ, it will be said, "Come, ye blessed." To those who neglected and despised the Saviour, and lived according to the course of this world, it will be said, "Depart, ye cursed." "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

May the people of God, when they review that part of life which is passed, when they consider the claims of that period of life in which they are at present placed, and when, with becoming resignation to the will of God, they anticipate that portion of life which yet remains, be prompted to abasement, to self-examination, to fresh energy in the divine life. "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

May the careless and the impenitent, amid

their indifference and unbelief, be led to ponder the warnings and the threatenings contained in the word of God; to reflect on the folly of procrastination; to consider the necessity of instant dedication to God, of immediate repentance. "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die?"

HOW LONG HAVE I TO LIVE?

2 Samuel xix. 34.

What a solemn interrogation is this, and how impossible is it for any created being to answer the inquiry! No man on earth, no angel in heaven, can tell how long I have to live, or how long you have to live; but were I endued with a spirit of prophecy, and could I tell how long a fellow mortal has to live, with what unspeakable anxiety would the question be propounded by such as are now living in a state of perfect indifference and insensibility.

That young man who has spent another year in the service of Satan, and who knows in his

own conscience, that if called suddenly away, he must sink to eternal death, with what ardent solicitude would he inquire, "How long have I to live?" That parent, who looks with trembling anxiety upon a numerous offspring, and who is endeavouring to amass an abundance of earthly treasure for them in this world, forgetful of the next, with what emotion would he propose the same inquiry, "How long have I to live?" And even the old man who has nearly filled his days, who is covered with grey hairs, and has one foot in the grave—even he, too, though he is conscious it cannot be long, would come forward with the same inquiry, "How long have I to live?" This is a suitable question with which to commence a new period of our mortal existence. It affords a suitable subject of meditation whenever death enters our families, our sanctuaries, or the vicinity where we reside; and it is a subject of universal interest—it comes home to every character and to every heart.

Good old Barzillai was a very aged man, even four-score years old, when he asked the prophet "How long have I to live?" And he seems to have no other desire than to return and die amongst his friends in his own city, and to be buried by the grave of his father and his mother. All this some may say, is but natural, very

natural, in a man who had so far exceeded the usual boundary of human life, but calculating according to his age, we may yet live more than half a century in the world. This is indeed possible; the man of thirty may say so, but let it be remembered, nothing can be more unreasonable than not to distinguish between possibility and probability. Can you, in your own conscience, believe this likely to be the case. Let us consult our own observation; how seldom are we called to follow to the grave or inter the mortal remains of one who had reached the age of three-score years and ten. How has it been in the majority of cases which have been witnessed by us within the past year? Have not the ravages of death been more numerous, and more alarming among the young than among any other class whatever? If, then, the youth inquires, "How long have I to live?" let him judge impartially, let him think on what he himself has witnessed, let him visit our cemeteries, and read the inscriptions on the tombs there, after which, his own conscience may, perhaps, answer the inquiry, so as to shake his presumptive confidence. In this also, as in other cases, it is wise to consult the oracles of eternal truth. And is there anything in the sacred volume which will encourage us to think that we have

long to live. No, on the contrary, our days are said to be "swifter than a post, they are passed away as the swift ships, as the eagle that hasteth to the prey." And, again, "What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away. Yea, all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." What a striking figure is this, to describe the brevity of human life. It is compared not to the trees of the forest, not to the sturdy oak, but even the beauty and glory of it; to the flower of the field, which can endure for a few months, and may be destroyed in a few minutes. Such are the descriptions given of the mortality of man, such the uncertain tenure on which we hold every earthly good, and such the danger of sinking to endless ruin, to which every impenitent sinner is every moment exposed. And within the space of a few hours, after hearing such admonitions as these, enforced as they are by the providence and the word of God, how commonly do we see men living as if the present life would never have no end, or the next would never have a beginning.

Another idea connected with the brevity of human life, and suggested by this solemn inquiry, is the wisdom of God in concealing from us the

time of our death. That there is an appointed time to man upon earth, and that the faithful servant of God is immortal till his work is done, are truths which cannot be reasonably controverted. But the precise moment when we shall pass into the invisible world, is known only to Him who has the keys of death and of hell; who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth. Some may be ready to say, did we but know how long we were to live, it would certainly excite in us more earnest desires to be prepared for another world, and would doubtless prove a blessing to us. But to this we may reply, nothing can be more arrogant and presumptuous than to oppose our judgment to the wisdom of Jehovah, whose understanding is infinite. So the rich man in hell is described as expressing the greatest confidence, that if one arose from the dead and went to his brethren, they surely would repent; but he is answered, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one arose from the dead." And were a voice from heaven to sanction these admonitions by calling to an impenitent sinner, and pronouncing the solemn sentence, "This year thou shalt die," it is more than probable, whatever temporary alarm might be produced, the impression would soon be obli-

terated from his mind, and without renewing grace, we are sure there would be no saving change.

This uncertainty as to the time of our death is calculated and intended, also, to promote watchfulness. Our Saviour himself made this improvement of it when he said, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." Thus we are called to stand prepared every day for that which may take place on any day. The pressing invitations of the gospel are enforced, too, from the same consideration—"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near." "Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Now is the accepted time; this is the day of salvation; "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Think, then, what may be, what *must* be the consequence of a little more procrastination.

"O fly! No tarrying make; death and despair
Hang on your lingering steps whilst you delay;
The heavens thick blackness gather, and the night
Comes surely on, that never turns to day."

THE IMPROVEMENT OF LIFE.

WHAT can be more solemn than human life? When we contemplate it in itself, in the influence which it exerts, and in the vast and awful consequences resulting from it, it is clothed with inexpressible solemnity.

Human life is most solemn from its *brevity*. It is a course which is soon run; it is a vapour which is soon exhaled; it is a tale which is soon told; it is a glass, the sands of which soon descend, and disappear. The flying cloud, the withering grass, the quickly faded flower, the arrow just propelled from the string, are appropriate and impressive emblems of the life of man. "It appeareth only for a little time, and then vanisheth away. Thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee."

Human life is most solemn from its *uncertainty*. It is just as fluctuating as it is transitory. When we are soberly regarding it, we find that we can calculate on nothing, depend implicitly on nothing. Instead of anticipating a year, we cannot confidently expect a day, we dare not boast even of a moment. In an

instant, in the twinkling of an eye, we may be cut down, and removed to the invisible and eternal world.

Human life is most solemn from *the work which we have to do.* What engagements are to be discharged; and how are those engagements perpetually recurring! What labours are to be endured; and in how patient and cheerful a manner are those labours to be borne! What difficulties are to be encountered; and how readily are those difficulties to be met; how boldly and vigorously are they to be overcome! What enemies are to be contended against; and how determinately must we grapple with those adversaries at every step of our journey! What changes are to be realized; and how submissive and unmurmuring is the spirit which we are to exemplify in the endurance of all those changes! What sufferings are to be experienced; and how are we required to remember that every rod has a voice, to which we are bound to listen, and whose communications we are bound to obey!

Human life is most solemn from *the eternity with which it is associated,* and to which it is ever tending with almost inconceivable rapidity. All its engagements, all its opportunities, all its privileges, all its changes, all its trials, are unspeakably solemn from their connection, their

close and inseparable connection with eternity; with that vast and changeless state of existence on which we shall soon enter, and to which the present state of being is only an introduction.

"O that unfathomable sea!
Those deeps without a shore!
Where living waters gently play,
Or fiery billows roar!"

If these remarks be true—and who can doubt them?—with how much seriousness should human life be regarded!—with how much care and earnestness should it be improved! It should never be trifled with, much less viewed with unmeaning and wanton levity. The development of such a spirit unfolds ignorance the most profound, and folly the most egregious. The man of serious reflection will see nothing in connection with human life with which to trifle; while the man of prayer, and the man of God, will see everything in it to awaken thought, and lead to the most earnest and unceasing exertion.

Improve life by estimating it aright. Human life can never be employed for the accomplishment of the noblest objects until this estimation be formed respecting it. Entertain those large, those sublime, and those impressive views of it which are so finely expressed and inculcated in

the word of God. Mark how Job, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Paul, and especially our Saviour, speak respecting its solemnity, its importance, and its tremendous responsibility. Endeavour to have a fellow-feeling with them, and act as they did through the journey of life.

Improve life by embracing every opportunity of securing advantage, and especially advantage of the highest kind. Let not one be undervalued, let not one be lost. Let every opportunity of improvement be promptly and eagerly seized; let it be regarded as a pearl; let it be esteemed as a treasure; let it be valued as the golden moment. Grasp it then at once, and let it not pass from you without a blessing being left behind. Knowledge must be acquired; the mind must be well cultivated; correct habits must be formed; special seasons for doing good must be sacredly regarded; and, above all, the heart, with all its passions, its affections, its sensibilities, and its increased holiness, supremely contemplated and solicited.

Improve life by associating it with fervent and unceasing prayer. There can be no preparedness for duty without much prayer; no fitness for the changes of life without much prayer. There can be no security amidst the

temptations and dangers of life, without much prayer. There can be no meetness for the decline and the close of life, without much prayer. And sure are we, that after the present life has terminated, there can be no celestial happiness enjoyed unless a spirit of habitual prayer has sweetened its anticipation, and fitted us for its full realization.

Life, to be useful and happy, must never be spent without prayer. Prayer will sanctify all its engagements, alleviate all its cares, sweeten all its mercies, give a tone and an impulse to all its efforts, and multiply and enrich all its enjoyments.

Improve life by always anticipating its close. It will soon be here, and much sooner, perhaps, than we expected. A few more fleeting years, or perhaps only a few months have to roll away, before death shall overtake us. Let us so live, and so labour, then, that we may render up our last account with joy, and not with grief. Let us live as those who expect to die. O! let us live as the citizens of the skies, and the children of the resurrection! Let every reader uniformly remember, that if he trifles with life, if he neglects its duties, throws away its opportunities, and despises its high responsibilities, he does it

at *his peril*—peril that may be awful, irremediable, eternal.

"How ought I then on earth to live,
While God prolongs the kind reprieve,
And spares this house of clay?
My sole concern, my single care,
To watch, and tremble, and prepare,
Against that awful day."

EBENEZER.

It was customary in Old Testament times, when any great event had occurred, or deliverance been accomplished, to set up a large stone or pillar in the immediate neighbourhood, and to bestow upon it a name commemorative of the circumstance. Thus when Jacob, on his journey to Padan-Aram, had been comforted and encouraged by a vision of angels and a voice from heaven, we are informed that "he rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it, and called the name of that place Bethel," that is, the House of God. In like manner, when the children of Israel had passed over Jordan, Joshua, by divine appointment, set up in

Gilgal twelve stones, which he had caused to be brought out of the midst of the river, and spake unto the people, saying, "When your children shall ask their fathers, in time to come, saying, 'What mean ye by these stones?' then ye shall let you children know, saying, 'Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.'" In like manner, also, when God in answer to the prayers of Samuel had given Israel a signal victory over the host of the Philistines, the prophet "took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Sher, and called the name of it Ebenezer," that is, the stone of help, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

The practice now alluded to was attended with many advantages in an age when graphical delineation was almost altogether unknown, and when the events of history were chiefly transmitted from father to son through the medium of oral tradition. Nor is there any reason to believe it was peculiar to the Hebrew nation. On the contrary, there still exist in many parts of Great Britain similar stones and clusters of stones, which, though they be the relics of a barbarous and superstitious age, and the history of them has long since passed into oblivion, were doubtless the Bethels, the Gilgals, and the Ebenezers of their day.

In these modern times, when light, and intelligence, and gospel privileges abound, it is unnecessary to set up a stone of help, or to record thereon what the Lord has done for us and for his people. But there are seasons in which it is equally salutary and useful to erect a spiritual Ebenezer in our hearts; and looking back upon all the way through which our good Shepherd has led us, to say, in the spirit and in the language of the prophet, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

Such a season is the commencement of another year—a period eminently calculated to excite serious reflections in the minds of both old and young—a period to which no one, at the distance of a few months, could look forward with any degree of certainty—a period at which neither the reader nor the writer of these remarks may be permitted again to arrive.

Come, then, fellow-Christians, believers in the same Lord, subjects of the same King, partakers of the same hope, expectants of the same glorious inheritance, let us here set up our Ebenezer, and say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

The past year, up to a late period, has been one of peace and quietude in our land. We have sat, as it were, under our vines and fig-

trees, and no one has made us afraid. The thunders of war have indeed been heard, but they have rolled at a distance, and only their fainter echoes have reached our shores. For a year of such tranquillity shall we not be grateful? Shall we not own our obligations to the Lord of Sabbaoth? and though he is now smiting us, shall we not, in the retrospect of such a period, erect our Ebenezer, and say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us"?

The past year has been one of division and speculation in our churches. Overweening men, in the pride of fancied superiority, have launched into the depths of an intricate and bewildering theology; and, through the influence of a spurious reputation and declamatory harangues, have turned aside not a few from the simplicity of the faith. But the period of delusion is fast passing away; the ark of the covenant rides secure amidst the deluge of error; wave after wave has rolled harmless from its sides; while the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, bursting forth with renovated splendour, are rapidly dissipating the clouds which obscure our national horizon; and that hand, which of old divided the waters which were above the firmament from those which were below it, is drawing as broad a line between the truths of the gospel and the

dreams of a heated imagination. Surely, while this is the case, it is the duty of all those who possessing their souls in peace, have been enabled to "hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering," to set up an Ebenezer, and to say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

The past year has been a period of commercial distress and pecuniary embarrassment to thousands. It were too much to expect that all who read these remarks have reposed in safety beyond the reach of an evil which has spread so widely; and yet, my brother, if in the midst of difficulties, it may be of temptation, you have been enabled to trust in the kind providence of God, and to "hold fast your integrity without letting it go," have you not cause to rejoice, to "thank God, and take courage"? But if, on the other hand, the past year has been to you a season of prosperity—if your basket and store have been blessed, and your substance been increased, still louder is the call upon you to give thanks to the Almighty. Thus, whether adversity has shut you up to prayer and supplication, or prosperity has called forth the voice of praise from your lips, you are equally, at this season, bound to set up your Ebenezer, and to say, in accents of grateful acknowledgment, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

But human life is a varied and rapidly changing scene. "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." The past year has doubtless been a time of sickness in many families—a season of death in not a few. My brother, my sister, have you lain, do you now lie on a bed of pain? Has the multitude of your bones endured strong pain? Or have you been called upon to attend the couch of a sick parent, or child, or wife, or husband? Have your hands closed the eyes of your dearest earthly friend? Has the desire of your eyes been taken away with a stroke? And yet, have your consolations abounded? Have a present God and a present Saviour assuaged your anguish and dried your tears? O, then, praise the Lord! Magnify and exalt the name of our God! "He afflicteth not willingly," nor willingly doth he grieve the children of men. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth; and scourgeth every child whom he receiveth." But has the case been otherwise with you? Has health smiled upon your dwelling? Does the little circle of your family and relations remain unbroken? Then let your ascriptions of praise and glory to the Most High be more elevated still—erect your joyful Ebenezer, and tune your voices to the gladsome lay of, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

What shall I say more? There is a little world within us, open only to the eye of Omniscience. "The heart knoweth its own bitteress, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy." Christian reader, has thy growth in grace during the past year been steady and progressive? Has it resembled "the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day"? Have the months, as they rolled away, been marked by new attainments in holiness, new zeal in the Redeemer's cause? I bid thee God-speed. Go on thy way rejoicing. Erect thine Ebenezer, and say "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me."

But you will perhaps say, "No! my advancement in the divine life has been tardy and interrupted." You have found the old man within you still struggling for the mastery. Hard thoughts of God have occasionally arisen, and the pleasures of sense and of sin have renewed their enticements. Yet, through the grace given to you, you have not been wholly overcome; "the fiery darts of the wicked one" have been quenched "by the shield of faith;" and you have been enabled to "withstand in the evil day." Set up, then, your Ebenezer; and while you pray for more grace, stronger faith, and "a hope that maketh not ashamed," say, in grateful

remembrance of past mercies, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me."

It appears, then, that in every situation in which the Christian can be placed, his grounds of thankfulness and joy continually abound; and that, while he remembers that the last hours of another year have expired, he may feel it his duty and his privilege to set up his spiritual Ebenezer, and to say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me."

What remains but that, in entering on another year, we may fervently implore the Redeemer's presence with us throughout its course; and solicit the sanctifying influences of his Spirit, that we may be enabled, in health or in sickness, in prosperity or in adversity, in peace or in trouble, to glorify his name from its commencement to its close. Or if, in the unsearchable depths of Divine wisdom, it be decreed that the year on which we are about to enter shall be our last upon earth, that we may be enabled, even on the bed of death, to show forth his praise; yea, even there to erect our Ebenezer, and to say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

THE DUTY OF SELF-EXAMINATION.

MUSINGS AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF A NEW YEAR.

WHAT more suitable, as a requiem to the departed year, than the bewailings of a sincere heart, while in the secret and silent chamber it voluntarily subjects itself to the testing process of the crucible of self-examination? Such a descent into the deep caverns of the human soul must, we know, at any time, present an appaling spectacle; but never does the sight shock us so much, perhaps, as when, at the commencement of a new year, we look back and contemplate that which has just expired, and which has borne in, beyond recall, its solemn accounts to the Judge of quick and dead. Truly, a naked human heart exhibits enough of sin and corruption to produce the deepest humiliation and the most entire self-abasement, and might well lead to the entreaty, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord! for in thy sight shall no flesh be justified." But what ought to be our feelings at such a season as the present, at the commencement of a new year, and in the review of sins, of judgments, and of mercies, past away as to time, but colouring our destinies as the

heirs of immortality—what, we say, ought to be our feelings? Surely penitence for the past, and holy resolve in respect to the future, should characterize the tone of our minds before God. At the commencement of the testing process, probably the more prominent sins of the by-gone year alone will present themselves; but these, alas! are but as a vestibule to the spiritual and immaterial temple—the soul. There lie hidden, as in ambush, a fearful host of unrecognized enemies, that war against its best interests. These are lodged in its secret chambers, and, as it were, serve to fill up the interstices thereof, so that the "candle of the Lord" alone can search them out.

If such, on inspection, be found the condition of an individual, such is also the heart of man universally. And let us bear in mind, that not less intimately connected with the interests and happiness of others, are the principles which regulate our thoughts, feelings, and actions individually. What caution and fidelity, therefore, are required of us, in order that we may neither deceive ourselves, nor mislead others! For, be it remembered, that no thought passes through the mind but gives birth to expression, in word or deed, and exerts its proportional influence, for good or for evil, upon others as

well as upon ourselves; and more than this, every comparative trifle will be seen, by and by, to have formed parts in that great whole, in which will be summed up the ultimate destinies of every human being.

This is a solemn fact, and one which we should seek to keep ever before the mind, that we may, in the strength of that grace which is sufficient for us, and which is made perfect in human weakness, cultivate and exercise those virtues which are expected to be found in, and which ought conspicuously to adorn the Christian professor. Purity, truth, benevolence, charity, should shine forth from him with double brilliancy, should sparkle like gems in the breastplate of the Jewish high-priest, and be worn as frontlets between his eyes.

Brought thus to see what is required of us as candidates for the heavenly world, our least delinquencies stand out as in bold relief, and compel the cry, "Unclean, unclean are we!" "Wert thou strict to mark iniquities, O Lord! who could stand?" And, alas! alas! by what slow degrees does the human heart progress in the knowledge of divine things! How few are its attainments! how faint its aspirations after the source of all good! The grovelling things of this passing world weigh down its

pinions; it struggles and struggles, but seldom does it soar beyond the things of time and sense. These, like the mountains of the material world, shut from its vision the far-off land of spiritual delights. In the growth of grace, so many storms assail the plant, so many blights its opening buds, it is long, very long, ere the delicate flower expands; and when it does, it is often very imperfectly. The ungenial elements by which it is surrounded tend to destroy its vital juices; and but for the fructifying beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and the refreshing breezes of the Holy Spirit, which counteract their influences, it would never come to maturity.

"This sweet exotic of celestial birth
Can flourish only in celestial air."

Yet let us not be discouraged by these difficulties of the way; let the disclosures of self-inspection urge us forward in the strength of the Lord, to be more vigilant over our spiritual foes, and more circumspect in our outward deportment, so that, "growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," our faith may become more vigorous, and our hope more strong; and thus we may go on from one degree of holiness to another, until we shall have "grown up into Christ in all

things." In the spiritual as in the material world, everything is progressive. The morning sunbeams do but partially illumine the constellated tower, whose ivyed turrets are reflected in the clear stream that runs at its base; but, as the bright luminary climbs higher and higher, more and more picturesque beauties are revealed, and when at length he has gained the zenith in the blue heavens, no part of the building is left in shadow, its fair form and elegant proportions stand out in unshrouded loveliness. If, then, in the works of creation, we see everything but gradually advance toward perfection, shall we wonder that Christian holiness, with so many impediments to oppose, so many jarring interests to discourage, should so slowly develope itself, or that we sometimes halt and become dissatisfied by the difficulties which impede our progress to maturity? But let us not, on this account, stop short of the goal. Let us hold on our way; still reach after these glorious attainments; still strive to enter in at the straight gate with unwearying ardour, encouraged by the promises, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." "In due time you shall reap if you faint not."

After such reflections, we should ask our-

selves and others, What ought to be the practical effects on the mind? And, first, we would say, that since we discover so much evil in ourselves, we should be careful to exercise a spirit of charity towards others. Charity is the connecting link which unites man to man, and earth to heaven. If this grace be in us, and abound, it shall "make us to be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;" whilst without this in our hearts, the bonds of society would be uprooted, and earth relapse into a second chaos.

> "This is the grace that lives and reigns
> When faith and hope shall cease;
> 'Tis this shall swell our joyful strains
> In the sweet realms of peace!"

In proportion to the strength of this grace, will be evinced that concern for our neighbour which is binding on all the followers of Christ. Benevolence is one of its most fruitful branches; and only in proportion to the exercise of charity and love, can man be said to be a transcript of his Maker. What has characterized our conduct the past year?

In order to avoid those lamentable deficiencies more general among us, as well as our grievous short-comings in all the requirements of God's holy law, let our self-inspection during the year

that has now dawned be more frequent. So shall our sense of delinquency be more keen; and with an habitual watchfulness, and prayerfulness, and Divine assistance, we shall find, on looking back, that we are advancing in the Christian course.

Let us take to ourselves "the whole armour of God," and in this panoply go forth conquering and to conquer, until every spiritual foe is disarmed, and the shout of victory is heard in our spiritual tabernacle, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ, my Lord!"

But it has been said, "self-knowledge is the most difficult of all knowledge." True; but "knowledge of our faults is the first step to improvement." We shall do well to bear this in mind, and nothing is so likely to do both as self-inspection. The motives which originate, mingle with, and colour our best actions, are so insidious, so imperfect, that it were vain to attempt to analyze them; their number and variety would occupy a volume—if, indeed, to do so were possible. Their true merits are known only to the Searcher of hearts; but, we repeat, where the essential elements of Christianity exist, there will be found that charity, or love, which we have been holding up as the grand regulating spring of all our thoughts,

feelings, and actions. The spirit of pure benevolence, which teaches to "forgive our enemies," to minister to the wants of others, which "thinketh no evil," which feels indignation at hearing the unfortunate maligned; which has a heart to feel for, and a hand to rescue the oppressed and the stranger; that checks the tongue of slander, and heals the breaches between friends; such a spirit will ever, more or less, distinguish the Christian character. And while this shall be the case, there will be no connivance at sin; he will but throw over the failings of his fellow-creatures that mantle of charity which the Scriptures commend, and which he needs to cover his own delinquencies.

In conclusion, let us ask ourselves, as well as our readers, if, in this partial anatomy of the heart, this probing of spiritual wounds, there have been detected no incongruities, no palpable errors, no absence of good, no presence of evil? The writer pleads guilty, and but for the blood of Christ, that "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," would despair of salvation.

We cannot, then, do better with the opening moments of a new year, than resolve, by Divine assistance, to continue the habit of self-examination, and for the future to live more nearly and more entirely to Him who hath given himself for us.

THE ANTI-REVIVALIST.

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Much has been said of late for and against revivals; the public mind is greatly agitated on the subject. It behoves us, as wise men, to look the question full in the face, and examine it in all its bearings; so I thought it would not be amiss to state some of the dangerous consequences anticipated from a revival of religion. Perhaps it may cause the revival fire to burn somewhat brighter; at least, it may agitate the matter a little more, and that will be something gained.

A revival of religion operates on two classes of society—those who are religious, and those who are not. It always begins with the former, by making them more watchful and prayerful, more zealous for the glory of God, and more compassionate over perishing souls. Then it immediately follows with the irreligious, leading them to consider their ways, to see their danger, to feel their need of mercy, and flee to Christ as the only refuge from the wrath to come. This change is wonderful and glorious. It has nothing on earth to equal it; nor is there anything like it in heaven. If the Almighty were

to convert a pious man into an archangel, it would not be so great a change as to translate a sinner from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. This grand movement shakes Satan's kingdom to its foundations. The devil looks and trembles at the sight, and ungodly men cannot behold it without dismay; yea, cold-hearted professors of religion may be expected to cry out against it. Some of the dangerous consequences they foresee are the following:—a loss of property, a waste of time, distress to parents, and the annoyance of entire communities.

What a loss of property! A revival fills the heart with benevolence; it opens the hand, it unties the purse-strings, it distributes to the poor, it actually gives wings to riches, and makes them fly to the ends of the earth, to aid in proclaiming salvation. Yet there is no waste of property. It turns the money, it is true, into a new channel; but still there is no actual waste; for I firmly believe that every man, even in a worldly point of view, is a gainer by his religion. I have never yet seen nor heard of persons thrown into prison for debts which they had contracted by works of charity. There may be instances of this kind, but they are so rare that I have never met with one of them yet

in all my travels in this and other countries. There is more money needlessly spent every day by ungodly men, and a little even by good men, more altogether than can be raised by the whole Church of Christ to evangelize the world; yet not a word is said about the money that is thus needlessly and foolishly squandered. No, no! the god of this world keeps all quiet on that head. But a revival takes place, and a little of the money is devoted to the cause of Christ which used to be spent in folly, and then comes the cry, What a loss of money!

What a waste of time! Half the night is spent by multitudes at the card-table, in the ball-room, at the theatre, in the drinking saloons, or in visiting parties, and no one complains of it as a waste of time; but when men are alarmed about the safety of their souls, and begin to read their Bibles, and go to the daily prayer-meetings, week-day preaching, and to other places where they may hear of Christ and get good to their souls, then it is said, See how idle these people are! Mark how much time they spend about religion!

What distress to parents! A father once said, when some of his children became pious, "This will bring down my grey hairs with sor-

row to the grave." But he has lived long enough to see his mistake. I have seen his grey hairs; and as they hung upon his shoulders, and his eyes streaming with tears, he exclaimed, "Now we are a whole family going to heaven!" It cannot be denied, that a revival produces great changes in families. Some young converts will be compelled, from principle, to forsake sinful yet lucrative pursuits; while some will leave their homes, and their country, and go as missionaries of the cross to distant lands; and we would not give a fig for that revival which did not produce such changes.

That a young convert should wish to become a herald of mercy is not at all wonderful—it would be a wonder if he were not to wish it. And though such separations must cause a struggle in the breasts of tender parents, yet, if parents felt as they ought on this subject, their sorrows would soon be exchanged for joy.

If our worthy President were to send to any town in these United States, saying that he was about to appoint a minister to some foreign country, and he wished to confer that honour on one of the youths of that town—the finest and the best—ah! we should see mothers of every grade, in love pressing onward with their sons,

and some of them praying, for the first time, "O, that my son may be the favoured youth!" But when Christ the Lord of all sends a message, "Who will go for us?" it is a rare thing to hear a parent say, "O Lord, I will give thee my son."

What annoyance it will create in the community! Annoyance!—to be sure. A man who is born again in a revival, will almost of necessity be a revivalist. He cannot go to heaven without company; and if he has no companions, he will make them. He cannot look with composure on the perishing multitudes around him. He sets to work in earnest; he calls aloud to one, and whispers to another. He is now in a new world; and he invites, and warns, and encourages others to look unto the Lamb of God, who has taken away his sins, and has made him happy. This man will be a troubler in Israel. I cannot conceive of anything more annoying than this, to those who are at ease in Zion, and also to those who are asleep in carnal security. These are some of the consequences anticipated from a revival of religion. Reader, how are you affected by the present awakening in our cities, and throughout the land?

WHAT HAVE I DONE FOR CHRIST?

When we think of what the Son of God has done and suffered for our redemption, well may each one ask, "What have I done for Christ?" It is very little indeed, that we can do for our exalted Redeemer, enthroned as he is above all principalities and powers, and surrounded by myriads of angels, who delight to do his pleasure; but are we anxious to ascertain and perform that little. When we have received kindness at the hand of a fellow-mortal, we are anxious to make some return; and if we cannot pay his beneficence to the extent we could desire, it is some comfort to us to be able to do it in any degree. Do we habitually feel in this manner towards the Lord that bought us, that redeemed us from eternal perdition by his precious blood.

What have I done to advance Christ's kingdom in the world? Have I done all I could to accomplish this end? Have I been instant in season and out of season with my unbelieving friends, pressing upon them the absolute necessity of a personal interest in the atoning blood of Jesus? Has my conduct been such that others

took knowledge of me, that I had been with Jesus and learned of him? Have I devoted my substance, my time, my influence, my life, and my all to the glory of God, and the good of men? What, in spiritual things, have I done for Christ? Less, infinitely less, than with my opportunities I might have done. O that I may be able to do more in the years which may yet be before me. O that I may be at once more active in my Saviour's cause, and more humble at his feet.

Again, What have I done in temporal things for the members of Christ's body? Have I done good to all as I had opportunity, especially to them that were of the household of faith? Have I been eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and father to the poor, like the venerable Job, who only saw the day of Christ afar off? Can I say with him, that the blessing of him who was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy? Might I not rather say with the brethren of Joseph, "I am verily guilty concerning my brother, in that I saw the anguish of his soul when he besought me, and I would not hear." Grant me, O Lord, the spirit of active benevolence and charity, and make me more willing than ever to spend and be spent in thy service. Since I know not how

short my time on earth may be, may I never allow a day to pass without an effort to advance thy cause, and to benefit my brethren of the human race.

Once more, What have I endured for Christ? Am I one of those fair weather disciples who rejoice to follow Christ through good report only, but shrink from bearing shame and reproach for him? In a word, have I shown myself disposed cheerfully to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ? Alas! I fear that in this also I have come short, and loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. With what humility and self-abasement, then, ought I to look back upon my past life, in which I have proved such an unprofitable servant; and with what earnestness ought I, at the commencement of another year, to approach the throne of grace, and implore that assistance and those gifts which shall enable me, in time to come, to walk more worthy of the vocation wherewith I am called. Accept anew, O my God and Saviour, the complete surrender of my heart and will. Let me cleave more closely than ever to thee; and in all I think, and say, and do, have a single eye to thy glory. May I often ask myself, What have I done for Christ? and conscious of my utter inability to do anything

without Divine aid, may I live and move as the daily recipient of a thousand mercies, and earnestly pray for thy Spirit to guide into all truth.

THE BLESSING WANTED BY THE CHURCHES.

UNTIL THE SPIRIT BE POURED UPON US FROM ON HIGH.
Isaiah xxxii. 15.

And most sure it is, that until such shall be the case, our souls will present a scene of spiritual sterility, desolation, and death. Fallen humanity is as the rock and the desert, "until the Spirit is poured from on high." Were this precious truth felt more deeply by all the churches, O what a cry would it send up to Heaven for the descent of the Holy Spirit! Nothing is more wanted, at the present moment, among professing Christians, than a thrilling and all-subduing sense of the necessity of the Holy Spirit's descent on ministers and on Christian churches. When such a conviction shall come, like a genial and refreshing gale, upon all the dwelling-places of Mount Zion, "the wilderness will be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field will be counted for a

forest. Then will judgment dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."

It is proposed, then, to state and illustrate the two following propositions: That spiritual prosperity can only result from the copious descent of the Holy Spirit; and that the advent of the Spirit is regulated by laws which place the blessing within our reach.

Would that gospel hearers could all be penetrated with the consciousness of their need of a more abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit! What longings after God, what breathings for new life, what a humbling sense of former coldness, and infirmity, and backsliding would it create!

All the powers, and enjoyments, and operations of the spiritual life, must actually come to a pause, if our felt dependence upon God's Spirit is suffered to decline. Have we not great need to cry with the prophet, as he gazed on the valley of vision, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!" There can be no life in the Church, but as it proceeds from, and is nourished by, the quickening Spirit of our risen and exalted

Lord. To press this great and solemn truth home upon the hearts of our readers will be the object of the following remarks, while we invite their prayerful attention to the following thoughts:

I. *Spiritual prosperity can only result from the copious descent of the Holy Ghost.*

"Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high," there will be no decisive tokens of invigorated Christian life. All will be dreary waste, and absolute sterility and death, while apostate humanity remains without the visitation of a Divine and all-transforming power.

1. Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, there can be no adequate and realizing impression of His character and work, as the great Agent of all spiritual life and holiness in our world.

Men in their natural state of spiritual darkness and insensibility, live, and feel, and act, as if there were no Holy Ghost. They pursue their course on the principle that they are sufficient to their own guidance and happiness, and have no affecting sense of their need of a Divine and gracious power to raise them from that death in sin in which they lie. Though the Holy Spirit is an omniscient Agent, "searching all things, yea, the deep things of God"—

though he is Almighty, and the author of the inspiration of all the prophets and apostles—of all the miracles of which we read in the Old and New Testament Scriptures, and of all the conversions that have ever taken place since the fall of man, yet the "*natural* man," that is, the unrenewed man, has no proper sense of his existence and agency in the Church; he is as indifferent to the great facts of his *personality*, *Divinity*, and *saving operations*, upon the minds of men, as if they were not a reality; he never feels his need of His quickening power, to raise him from his death in sin; and if at times he thinks of the Father of all, and of Jesus the Saviour of the world, he is never impressed with the thought that he needs or can receive anything from the Holy Ghost. This, it is to be feared, is very much the condition of all the unconverted. If in the theory of religion they have been taught, there is found the doctrine concerning the Divine Spirit, the Third Person in the adorable Trinity, yet in their inmost thoughts, in the constant workings of their intelligent and accountable minds, there is no actual dependence upon the Spirit, no fervent desire rising to Him for his blessed influence—no abiding, operative sense of his all-pervading, necessary, and Divine agency. What a lament-

able and exposed state is this for any sinful being to live in from day to day! Yet is it not the state of thousands and tens of thousands who sit under the sound of the gospel? The only *power* by which their state can be changed, even the power of the Holy Spirit, they feel not to need, and never ask in humble and earnest prayer his renewing and sanctifying grace. O that all who are careless and unconcerned in reference to the Holy Spirit, could be brought to feel, that, in their present state of mind, they are riveting upon themselves the chain of depravity and unbelief, just because they are without any active and fervent desire for the descent and quickening energy of the Holy Spirit.

2. Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, there will be but few Pentecostal movements in connection with the preaching of the word.

The very tendency to look for such movements comes from the Holy Spirit. The vast majority of gospel hearers are not looking for another Pentecost. They are contented, or at least not uneasy, in their present depressed state, in so far as it respects the limited number of conversions, as compared with the masses

who attend on the preaching of the word. We should be, in the present low state of the Church, astonished and overwhelmed if we were to hear of hundreds drawn to Christ by a single sermon. But such soul-animating sights cannot be seen but as the result of a mighty and merciful effusion of the Holy Spirit. It is not a few precious drops from the fructifying cloud that can refresh and fertilize the barren and parched soil; but it is the warm and copious shower descending with a plentiful fulness that creates beauty, and verdure, and fruitfulness. And so it is under the minstry of the word. A few precious drops of Divine influence will not relieve the barren wastes of mind, and create a Pentecostal awakening among the hearers of the gospel. We want "showers of blessing,"—we want the Holy Spirit to be *poured* on ministers and people, in order to the realization of a great conversion-work. It is a mercy to see a few turning to God—to hear from one and another the importunate cry, "Sirs, what must we do to be saved?" But why should so many remain unmoved beneath the sound of the word? Why should so many perish at mercy's threshhold, while so few look to Christ and are saved? Have you, dear reader, pondered *well* the grand reason? Have you been

impressed with the fact, that there is no shower, no mighty outpouring of Divine influence upon the ministry of the word. There may be evidence of the descent of the gentle dew—there may be, here and there, a few drops falling on the bleak and barren earth; but where can you see, in any of our religious circles, even the signs of a coming shower of heavenly blessings, and where can it be said that "the Spirit is largely *poured* out from on high?" Nor will the consummation, so devoutly to be wished, be realized under the preaching of the word, until "times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." O that we could see this state of things reversed, and find that every Sabbath was a Pentecost, and every sermon was the message of life and salvation to penetrated multitudes! What glorious work would preaching then be! What scenes of rejoicing and triumph would be the assemblies of Zion! As in Jerusalem of old, great fear would come upon all who beheld the wondrous change, and there would be "added to the church daily such as should be saved;" while there would be joy among the angels of God, not over *one* returning prodigal, but over multitudes translated out of darkness into marvellous light.

O blessed power! O glorious day!
What a large victory shall ensue!
And converts, who thy grace obey,
Exceed the drops of morning dew.

3. Until the Spirit be poured from on high, the Christian Church will remain in a comparatively languishing and unprosperous state.

It is a solemn but indubitable fact, that as the Church is, so must the world be. If its spiritual temperature is low, the impression on the world will be faint, and feeble, and almost imperceptible. If it is powerfully acted upon by a remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit, then will it be in a position to tell with resistless force and energy upon those who are without. A common-place profession of the gospel, free from outward blame, and orderly in the observance of religious duties, but devoid of deep-toned spirituality, active love, and burning zeal for the honour of Christ, will never awe the world, or cause the thoughtless, the unconcerned, and the profane, to pause in their career of folly and impenitence. On the disciples of Christ, those who are pledged for the maintenance of his honour in the world, must fall a more plenteous effusion of the Holy Spirit, if showers of blessing are to descend upon the out-field of the world lying in the wicked one.

Then, when the Church is converted, she will not only be prepared to strengthen her brethren, but she will be equipped for the great work which has been assigned to her instrumentality, viz. *the conversion of the world.*

Then will she have power with God, and will prevail. Her life, infused by the Church's glorious Head, will vitalize all around her, and within the circle of her influence. She will look forth upon the world, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Her living, active power will be felt upon the inert masses of depravity and worldliness. Her benevolence will fall upon the selfishness of mankind at large like the drops of morning dew. Her zeal will be exerted on behalf of the various objects of social, moral, and spiritual misery and wretchedness. She will be in positive and palpable sympathy with Christ himself—living for him, acting for him, and identifying all her interests and all her happiness with the advancement of his honour, and the glory of his kingdom.

But when, O when, is the Church to reflect the bright image of her Lord? When is she to spring up in her apostolic vigour and purity? When is she to show herself dead to the world, and alive to Christ? When is she to appear

the virtuous and uncontaminated spouse of her rightful Lord? When is she to prove herself the embodiment of her own principles? When is she to be purged from her petty strifes and bickerings, and to walk forth in her might and majesty, as the great philanthropist of human kind? When is she to become the fitting representative of her absent Lord, the guardian of his honour, and the herald of his coming kingdom and glory upon earth? Ah! when, dear friends? Only when "the Spirit is poured upon us from on high." Till then, the mass of professors will "seek their own things, not the things which are Jesus Christ's;" and in this depressed and enfeebled state must she remain until she goes forth out of herself, and seeks to draw in fresh life from Him who has said, "The water that I shall give you, shall be in you a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

This leads to the second deeply interesting portion of our theme.

II. *That the Advent of the Spirit is regulated by laws which place the blessing within our reach.*

1. The Spirit will be poured from on high, in answer to prayer.

A prostrate Church, crying for the advent of

the Spirit, and panting for a new baptism of power from on high, would not struggle, and plead, and agonize in vain. God would then "arise and have mercy on Zion;—the time, yea, the set time, to favour her," would then have arrived. The blessings of Messiah's reign would then "come down like rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth." God would then be entreated of in reference to those great promises: "I will pour my Spirit upon all flesh;" "So shall he sprinkle many nations;" "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and judgment." Yes, prayer, the prayer of faith, the prayer that never ceases, the prayer which rises around the throne like the voice of many waters, shall bring down streams of divine influence to refresh God's parched heritage, and to bless and fructify a barren and desolate world.

Yes, and to this law of prayer every child of Adam is encouraged to look with hope, as it respects the descent of more copious supplies of Divine grace. Its provisions come within the reach of every anxious soul longing for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Hear the voice of Jesus himself: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how

much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask him." We have but to ask, and we shall receive; we have but to seek, and we shall find; we have but to knock, and the door shall be opened unto us. But God will be inquired of, if the Spirit is to be poured from on high. He will not squander his gifts upon an unexpectant Christian, or an unexpectant Church. If we would see God reviving his own work in the midst of the years, we must fall in with his own revealed plan, and prove by the fervour, and urgency, and confidence of our prayers, that we are longing for, and ready to welcome the copious and refreshing descent of the Holy Ghost.

2. The Spirit will be poured from on high, when the church is in a better frame for his advent.

She must prepare herself as a bride prepareth herself for her Bridegroom. Christ will come in power and great glory to his Church, when she is in a posture of readiness for so august a visitor. The Holy Spirit is looking to the Church for a responsive echo of his own teaching and influence in the minds of men. He will not with impunity be grieved—he will not be quenched, by our apathy, our cold heartedness, our undue love of present things, our

unloving tempers, our grievous backslidings, our strifes and divisions, our little petty animosities, our sad and mournful falls. He expects us to be responsive to his suggestions, to be obedient to his impulses, to be temples for his reception, dedicated to his praise. Let us ponder these thoughts, and lay them to heart, and then may we expect, individually and collectively, that the Spirit will be poured from on high upon us.

3. The Spirit will be poured from on high when the testimony of his truth is yielded to with grateful and unresisting submission.

The Holy Spirit speaks in the word. It is his whole testimony concerning all things in which perishing sinners are most vitally concerned. He expects that we will hear his voice in the written word, and not "harden our hearts, as in the provocation, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness." When the Bible has its place in our thoughts, and convictions, and feelings, and purposes, and plans, and when the Church shall thus honour the Bible as the testimony of the Spirit—then will the Spirit be poured upon us from on high; and all Zion's waste places will be refreshed and fertilized by the presence and glory of the Lord.

O, then, dear readers, if you would realize the blessing promised, if you would live to see

the Spirit poured out from on high, and the wilderness changed into a fruitful field, reverence, examine, believe, prize, ponder, pray over your Bibles. There only can you find the lessons of the Spirit; and while you are struggling on the bended knee of prayer to become acquainted with them, you may expect, you may hope, you may even be confident that the Spirit will be poured from on high, and that your souls will become as a garden which the Lord himself hath watered.

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